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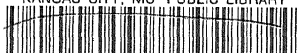
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Batboy of the Braves

BATBOY OF THE



by Paul Wick as told to Bob Wolf

New York

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PICTURE CREDITS

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Foreword

Baseball is more than a sport and a business. It is a wonderland whose brightness never dims. Even we who have played it professionally for many years are still captivated by it.

But the most dazzling vantage point of all is that of the batboy. He sees it with the eyes of youth, from a close and intimate view. He is a part of the team and with it rejoices or suffers. He lives with the players in their working hours, doing tasks more important than the fans, or even he himself, may realize. In his own small way, he is an important cog in the organization. Moreover, he is in a position of pride and envy.

In his time as Braves batboy, Paul Wick has learned to know the team perhaps better than we know ourselves. In him and the others like him lives the spirit of baseball, a sport scientific, fascinating, and, above all, human.

Most of us are inclined to take batboys for granted. The players have the glamor jobs and draw most of the fans' attention. Even the youngsters, as much as they envy a boy

who is lucky enough to be with a major league ball club, are far more concerned with their idols in uniform.

But don't think for a minute that a batboy is not vital to a team. He is vital not because he hands bats to the hitters or because he carries the bats back to the dugout. These are the tangible things, the things that the fans see, and they obviously are quite routine. A batboy is vital not because he performs these routine duties, but because of the spirit that he brings to the team and to the game.

Did you ever wonder, when you saw a batboy kneeling next to a player in the on-deck circle, what was going through his mind? Did you ever grasp the thrill that comes to a boy when he steps onto the field, as a member of a big league baseball club, before 30,000 spectators?

If you haven't felt these things, then you haven't been to a baseball game. A batboy is as much a part of the sport as the men who play it and those who, like us, serve as managers and coaches.

You have to be lucky to become a major league batboy. "Air" Wick himself will admit this a hundred times over. But for a big break at the right time, the batboy of the Braves could have been any one of countless thousands of other boys in the Milwaukee area.

But after all, isn't this true of life itself? Most of us have our jobs today because we happened to be in the right place at the right time. If we hadn't, other people would be performing the same jobs equally well. In baseball, there is only one Warren Spahn, only one Henry Aaron, and only

one Stan Musial, but who is to say that many of the others simply weren't lucky enough to make the grade?

The important thing is that Paul Wick is the Braves' batboy and that being the Braves' batboy has brought him experiences that he will treasure the rest of his life. Whatever he does in the years ahead, he never will forget what it was like to be a major leaguer. He never will forget the joys and heartbreaks that go with the great game of baseball—the joys and heartbreaks that, from his matchless vantage point, he describes in this book.

Perhaps, before he “retires” and heads into the less glamorous world of business, Paul will experience the additional thrill of being on a pennant winner and participating in a World Series. We hope so, not only for his sake and our own, but for the sake of Milwaukee's fans—the greatest in baseball.

But pennant or no pennant, Paul Wick and others like him have been and will continue to be essential to the great national pastime. Baseball without a batboy would not be baseball.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Fred Haney". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large, sweeping "F" and a long, trailing "y".

Manager, Milwaukee Braves

Batboy of the Braves

CHAPTER I

My Lucky Day

I didn't know it at the time, but March 18, 1953, was the most important day of my life. It wasn't my birthday or anything like that. It was the day the Braves moved their franchise from Boston to Milwaukee.

When the shift came, I was just another kid in eighth grade at St. Sebastian's school. Just two years later I was part of a major league ball club. Even now I have to pinch myself once in a while to make sure it's true.

I've heard a lot of people say that getting the Braves was the greatest thing that ever happened to Milwaukee. I've also heard a lot of them say it was the best thing that ever happened to them personally. I don't know for sure about the rest of them, but I certainly can speak for myself. Believe me, I never had it so good.

How does a guy get to be a batboy in the big leagues? Well, for one thing, you have to be lucky—plenty lucky. Almost any kid can handle the job if he puts his mind to it.

But first you have to get the job, and to do that you have to be in the right place at the right time.

I happened to be in the right place, or rather Warren Spahn did. You see, my dad is in the real estate business, and when the Braves came to town, they had quite a problem finding places to live. Dad rented a duplex to the Spahns and the Lew Burdettes, one family living upstairs and the other downstairs, and that's where I got my big break.

Dad got to know Spahn especially well. Warren would come to our house now and then, and I'll never forget the first time he did. I could hardly believe I was under the same roof with a big league ball player, let alone one of the outstanding pitchers in the game. Warren has won twenty games seven times now, and he has won 203 altogether since joining the Braves back in 1942.

Even then I had no idea of becoming the Braves' bat-boy. Sure, I "knew somebody," but the 1953 season passed and nothing happened. Little did I know that by the following spring I'd be on my way up the ladder to head bat-boy.

In any other year, I would have been back in school before the season was over. But Dad decided to take the family on a trip around the country. All three of us dropped out of school for a year—I was fourteen, my sister Virginia was eleven and my sister Barbara was seven. None of us minded too much, of course. Neither did my mother, who got not only a vacation from housework but relief from

the hay fever that gets so bad around the Middle West in August and September.

When I asked Dad where we were going, he reeled off the names of a bunch of places—Washington, California, Salt Lake City, etc. I didn't really get excited, though, until I heard the two magic words—"spring training." We were going to wind up the trip at Bradenton, Fla., where the Braves train. Who could ask for any more than that?

Well, I didn't ask for any more, but I got it free of charge. After going through a lengthy itinerary, Dad had an afterthought: "Maybe we'll stop at the Spahns' on the way back from the coast," he said.

Dad hardly had the words out of his mouth before I started packing. It was late in August when we started out in the family car on a trip that wasn't to end until the following April. And to think that my friends had nothing to do but go to school!

We went to the state of Washington and stayed two or three weeks. I guess we saw every sight there was to see, plus some beautiful scenery. Then we drove down the West Coast toward California, or rather Mom and I did. Dad had to commute between his job and his family; so he flew home and got in a few days' work while we were on the road.

Soon after we reached San Francisco, Dad met us and we saw some more interesting sights. We even went to Alcatraz, or rather we visited it. The next big stop was the Spahns' ranch near Hartshorne, Oklahoma, which to me was a far

more important spot than Washington or California.

Dad had to go home from San Francisco on business, but he rejoined us in Nevada and vowed that nothing would prevent him from spending the full two weeks with the Spahns. Nothing did, either.

We did a lot of horseback riding while we were there. We also watched the hired hands round up cattle, and we even talked a little baseball. The big thing, though, was something that Spahn said one night: "As long as you're going to be at spring training, maybe you can get a job as batboy."

Naturally I was all for it. I think my first words were something like, "That sure would be great." If so, I made an understatement. Anyway, Warren told me there might be a chance.

It actually was too early to get excited, with spring training still three months off; but as we continued our travels, I couldn't help thinking about what Warren had said.

"Batboy for the Braves?" I'd say to myself. "I wonder if it's possible."

We paid our home a visit over the Christmas holidays, and soon after the first of the year we were on our way again—this time toward Florida. We got there before training began and moved into a cottage on Anna Maria Island. It was a beautiful spot on the Gulf of Mexico, twelve miles across a rickety bridge from the training camp at Bradenton.

It turned out that the Spahns were going to share the

house with us. When I heard this, I was pleased for more reasons than one. Warren certainly would remember now to put in that pitch for me as batboy.

He did remember, too. On the first day of practice, he asked Joe Taylor, who doubles as equipment manager and assistant trainer, if the club had a batboy. Joe said no and told Warren to bring me around the next day.

It was official now. My "career" was launched. I rode into Bradenton with Spahn every day, and in no time at all I began to feel like one of the boys.

Actually it wasn't that simple. Being the spring training batboy wasn't the same as being the regular season batboy. But at least I had my foot in the door. I just happened to be lucky enough to be in Florida at the right time—when every other kid my age was going to school.

I'll always remember my first day on the job. The players razed me a little, but I didn't mind at all. I was much too happy for that. After I hauled all the equipment onto the field, I got my biggest thrill yet. I borrowed a glove and shagged flies in the outfield during batting practice. I felt like a big leaguer—at least until I came in on a fly ball that went over my head. And I didn't get hurt, either.

Of course, I wasn't always that fortunate. I was in Trainer Doc Lacks' room so often that it got to be a joke with him. He would laugh when he'd see me coming off the field, a finger or thumb held in front of my face to undergo inspection for extent of damage. He would always prescribe what he called the lemon treatment, and it usually

worked. Once, though, I got my right index finger so squarely in the way of a line drive that it never did heal right. The finger is twisted to this day, and I suppose it always will be.

Not content with risking life and limb in the outfield, I am courageous enough on occasion to step into the batter's box against pitchers like Spahn and Burdette. One day I stayed after practice and Spahn pitched to me. He teased me along at first, and for a moment I thought I had possibilities. Then he yelled, "Look out for this one," and he wasn't kidding. Before I knew what had happened, my left foot had become the target of one of Spahn's sinkers.

Since then I haven't been too anxious to dig in against Spahn or Burdette. But I've done pretty well against Bob Keely, our bullpen coach, who does quite a bit of the batting practice pitching.

Of course, everybody hits Keely. Bob is a real nice guy, probably the hardest worker on the club, and as a pitcher he is the best thing I know for rebuilding the confidence of our hitters.

I wouldn't say Bob was a slow ball pitcher, but I remember what Joe Adcock, our first baseman, said one time about Stu Miller, who used to dispense soft "junk" for the St. Louis Cardinals and Philadelphia Phillies before he drifted back to the minors. Miller was the Braves' No. 1 jinx, and after one of his victories, Adcock quipped, "He's the slowest pitcher since Bob Keely."

I wasn't sure who should have felt insulted—Keely or Miller. Neither was anybody else on the club, I guess. But anyway, that gives you an idea of the kind of pitcher Keely is. The big difference between him and Miller is that Miller throws curves.

Besides exposing myself to such extracurricular hazards as shagging flies and batting against the likes of Spahn and Burdette, I have found a certain amount of risk attached to my regular line of duty.

I've been hit half a dozen times by bats, either while a player was swinging one or while one was in the air after being used. Once I got clipped on the shoulder by Adcock's bat while Big Joe was taking some warmup swings in the on-deck position. He always kneels in front of me, and this time he didn't realize that I was so close.

Batted balls also present a hazard. I've managed to get in the way of several grounders, but my biggest scare came on a "near miss." I was almost clobbered by a line drive that I think would have decapitated me if I had been a little less quick.

Several players have taken steps to lessen the perils connected with being the on-deck hitter. Del Crandall, for example, stays about ten or twelve feet behind the regular on-deck circle, almost as far back as the cinder path in front of the stands. Adcock uses a similar precaution and so do others.

I didn't really get nervous on the job until the first exhibition game at Bradenton. After all, this was going to

be a lot different than handling bats in a practice session. The slack season was over.

Not being fully versed in a batboy's duties, I enlisted the aid of Tommy Ferguson, visiting clubhouse man for the Braves and a former batboy for the Boston Red Sox. Fergy gave me a few tips and told me not to get excited, which was quite an order for a fourteen-year-old kid on the field with the Braves and the world champion New York Yankees.

But I managed to remain fairly calm—until I heard a shout from one of the umpires. It was Augie Donatelli, who was to work the game behind the plate. He yelled, "Well, where are the baseballs?"

Nobody said a word, but everybody looked at me. I didn't know why at first, but the idea finally sank in. Donatelli thought I was the ball boy as well as batboy, and the funny part about it was that he was right. Or at least he was going to be right in another minute or so.

Charlie Grimm, who was our manager then, turned to me and said, "You'd better take care of the balls, too."

So I was elected, without opposition, and I became a double-duty man before the first ball was pitched in my first major league game.

In case you hadn't noticed, batboys and ball boys manage to keep fairly busy during games. You can imagine, then, what thoughts ran through my mind at that moment. How was I ever going to handle two jobs when I wasn't even sure I could handle one?

As things turned out, the order wasn't as large as I had anticipated. Being the batboy was easy enough because the distance between the dugout and home plate in the Braves' training camp is so short. And being the ball boy was even easier because I didn't have to worry about fielding balls off the net as I would have at Milwaukee County Stadium. If a ball was fouled back of the plate at Braves' Field in Bradenton, it usually went out of the park. The place seats only about 3500 customers.

I got through the game without any glaring mistakes—well enough, anyway, to hold my job. The only trouble I had was getting the bats out of the way before somebody tripped over them.

While nobody tripped that day, I remember a time later when I wasn't so fortunate—or rather when an umpire wasn't so fortunate.

The umpire was Tom Gorman, one of the biggest in the league and also one of the nicest guys. He backed up to clear the way for a play at the plate and in doing so fell over a bat that I hadn't managed to get out of the way.

Gorman fell to one knee, then braced himself and said to me, "You know, a guy could break his neck on one of these things."

The grin on his face told me that he wasn't particularly serious, but I learned a lesson from the experience nevertheless. Ever since then I've made it a point to clear away the bat before I even think of doing anything else.

Another time, I was a little slow in getting the bat be-

cause I had to go back to the dugout just about the time the batter hit the ball. Umpire Jocko Conlan soon reminded me about it, flipping the bat to me with his foot and saying, "Here, don't you want this?"

But Jocko was kidding me, too, just as he and Gorman and Babe Pinelli and several other umpires have done so many times. It always makes me a little angry when I hear crowds boo umpires just because they're umpires—you know, they sometimes boo them when they first come onto the field. The way I feel about it, umpires have their jobs to do, just like anybody else in this game, and they do it well. Besides, in my opinion they're a pretty fine bunch of fellows.

An umpire even gave me my first tip as a batboy. I don't mean advice or the name of a good race horse. Augie Donatelli gave me a dollar for cleaning up his quarters at the Braves' spring training camp.

Augie was the umpire assigned to the Braves at the time. I kept the bats in his dressing room, which was a separate little house next to the Braves' clubhouse. I had been on the job only a few days when he gave me the tip. Not only that, but he gave my morale a further boost by complimenting me on my work. "You're doin' a good job, kid," he said. "How'd you like to do this all the time?"

"How'd I like it?" I said. "I'd love it!"

Yet even though I had the batboy's job on a purely temporary basis, and it was only spring training, I was well

aware that thousands of kids would give their eyeteeth to be in my shoes.

I was even becoming a sort of celebrity. During games, I would get a hand if I looked good fielding a foul ball, and I would draw a little razzing if I looked bad. Before and after games, I was much in demand by kids who wanted baseballs, broken bats, and other souvenirs.

Naturally I didn't mind the limelight. What boy of fourteen would? And the best part of it was that it turned out to be only the beginning. Later on, after I got to be the first-string batboy, fans even asked me for my autograph. How about that? Me, a mere freshman in high school, signing autographs!

The fans in Milwaukee are nutty about the Braves. They stand around outside County Stadium after games, hundreds of them, waiting for their heroes to come out—a player, manager, coach, trainer, or even batboy. As soon as he appears he is bombarded by autograph seekers. Often a player finds it quite a problem to reach his car, and even after getting there he may have an awful time clearing a path so he can drive away.

Sometimes the younger fans get a little rambunctious. Eddie Mathews once had ink tossed all over a good suit of clothes. But I guess that's part of the price of fame. As for me, I get such a kick out of being asked for my autograph that I say "Thank you" after signing it.

I got through spring training all right, working at all

the games in Bradenton and a few out of town. I even got paid—thirty dollars at the end of the spring season!

Shortly after the Braves broke camp at Bradenton and headed north for two weeks of barnstorming, my family and I got into our car and started for home. As far as I knew, my career as a batboy was over, but there still was something pleasant to look ahead to. Joe Taylor had asked me before we left if I wanted to work in the clubhouse in Milwaukee, and naturally I had answered yes. After my brief taste of big league society, I had an understandable hunger for more of the same.

When we got back to Milwaukee, Tommy Ferguson called me and told me I could be his assistant in the visitors' clubhouse. It wasn't the same as being batboy, but it was still a whole lot better than watching from the bleachers. Besides, it would be interesting to get to see and know the players on the other teams in the League.

The season was only about a month old when I got a big break. The visitors' batboy had to give up his job, and I was named his successor.

It was hard to get used to being the visiting team's batboy. I felt funny wearing the uniform of the enemy, especially if it happened to look like a potato sack on my 5 foot 10 inch, 145-pound frame. I felt even funnier having to restrain my feelings—there were so many times that I wanted in the worst way to root for the Braves but didn't dare open my mouth.

As a rule, the out-of-town players didn't talk to me very

much when they were kneeling next to me in the on-deck circle. Once, however, Duke Snider, the slugging center fielder of the Brooklyn Dodgers, gave me some tips on how to play the outfield. "You don't want to be a batboy all your life, do you?" he said.

I didn't answer, or at least I don't remember answering, but at that moment I wasn't so sure there was anything I'd rather be than a batboy.

Came August of 1954 and a second promotion—this time to the rank of ball boy.

Most people don't know that the visitors' batboy rates below the ball boy. To the average fan, the ball boy appears to be little more than a flunky. Maybe so, but the big thing is that the ball boy works in the home clubhouse instead of that of the visitors.

That's why I was so happy when I was told to trade jobs with the ball boy. Now I would be working in the Braves' clubhouse, back with the players I had come to know and like in spring training.

The chief duties of the ball boy, aside from the pregame and postgame duties in the clubhouse, are to furnish baseballs to the plate umpire and to retrieve foul balls off the net which extends from the screen behind the plate to the mezzanine between the lower and upper decks.

I got a big charge out of playing the balls off the net; and if I made a good catch, the fans would let out a big cheer. It wasn't long, though, before I was confronted with my first serious problem. Somebody threw a roll of toilet

paper out of the upper deck, and as my luck would have it, it gently unrolled and came to rest on the net, blocking the view of some of the fans behind home plate. Within a minute or so, John Quinn, the Braves' general manager, sent instructions for me to remove it.

I had to climb up by way of the railing in front of the box seats, but when I got up as far as I could go, I still couldn't reach the roll.

One wise guy in a box seat shouted, "What's the matter? Can't you flush it out of there?"

The crack drew a ripple of laughter from the spectators in that sector, but it wasn't funny as far as I was concerned. This was part of my job—a job I very much wanted to keep.

Finally, with the fans urging me on, I managed to pull the paper off the net. It was a near thing for a while, though.

Of course, I always got razzed when I had to climb up for balls stuck in the net. There were taunts from the customers, too, when I failed to catch a ball coming off the net. They would call me "Butterfingers" and similar names, but of course it was all in fun.

I wasn't cut in for any of our 1954 world series money (we finished third), as batboys and ball boys often are, but I hadn't really expected to be. After all, I had been working in the home clubhouse only a month or so. And besides, my pay during the season hadn't been bad at all.

Shortly before the season closed, Joe Taylor came to me

with some wonderful news (for me). Jerry Maday, who had been the Braves' batboy in 1953 and '54, was leaving. "This is Jerry's last year," Joe said. "He's out of high school now and we never keep batboys after that. Looks like you're in line for the job next year."

Was I excited? Well, no more so than any one of a million kids would be if he heard that he might be the batboy for a major league team. I had figured that Jerry probably would have to give up the job, but I hadn't heard anything definite. Now I was really up in the clouds.

"It isn't set yet," Taylor told me. "We won't make any decision until spring training. Don't worry, though. You've definitely got the inside track."

Inside track or not, I was on pins and needles all winter. Never did a winter take so long to end, and Milwaukee has some pretty long winters.

I even had to sweat out spring training before I got word. Then it came at last. When the Braves got home from their exhibition trip, Taylor gave me the news I'd been waiting for since the previous September.

This was it. I was batboy for the Milwaukee Braves. At the tender age of sixteen, I had it made.

CHAPTER II

The Daily Routine

After surviving an entire winter of uneasiness about getting the batboy's job, I suddenly found myself confronted with a new problem. This one could be summed up in a single word—school.

My extended vacation had ended the previous fall, and now I was a second semester freshman at Marquette High School. Since the Braves played some of their games on weekday afternoons, there could be complications if I failed to receive the proper co-operation from the school principal.

It so happened that Dad and the principal, Father Kenneth McKenney, had been classmates at Marquette High twenty-five years before. This, Dad figured, would make it a cinch for me to get the special permission necessary.

"Don't worry about Father McKenney," Dad told me. "We're old buddies, you know. We played on the football team together in 1930. He was an all-state tackle and I

took up space on the bench. We were together in basketball, too. He was an all-state guard and I was the tenth man on a ten-man squad. I can't see where you have anything to worry about."

He made it sound like a pushover, but it wasn't—not by a long shot. Father McKenney was not one to let old friendships stand in the way of duty. When I went to see him and made my request, he recalled old times for a moment, then said sternly, "It's perfectly all right, Paul—if you maintain a 90 average."

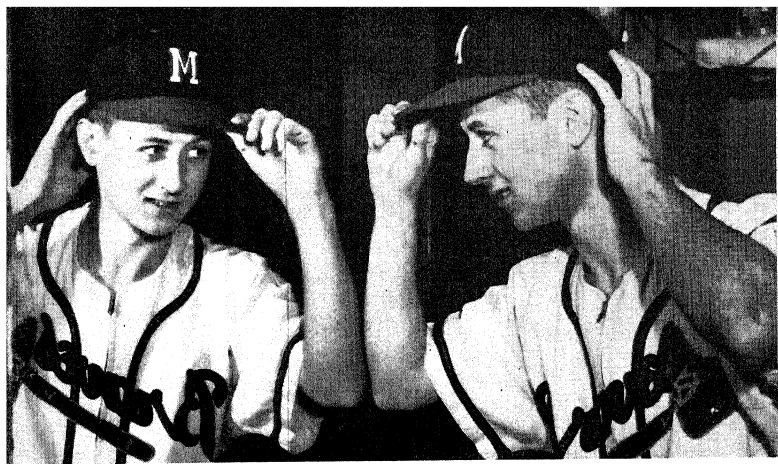
My Dad is rarely at a loss for words, but he was speechless when I told him about this. So was I, for that matter. I could scarcely get the words out.

A 90 average! Was that all I needed? Sure, I was in that vicinity so far, but how long could I keep it up? This bat-boy job was sure to cut a pretty deep hole in my study time.

Oh, well, I could worry about that small matter later. At the moment all that mattered was that I could keep my job. Even with the requirement of a 90 average staring me in the face, I felt as though a big load had been taken off my shoulders. Now I could go about the business of getting the season under way.

Opening day—April 12—came a few days later. The players will tell you that there is something special about opening day that makes even a veteran nervous. You can imagine, then, how nervous I was.

True, I already had put in a season as a big leaguer,



I was mighty proud of myself the day I wore a Braves uniform for the *first time*.

I'm the third from the left in this group of attentive high school students. My colleagues are (*from left*) Bill Topp, Chuck Forrestal, Joe Maly, Brand Spangenberg, Mike Urban (partially hidden), and Norbert Berres.





It was a thrill to be out on the field with the major leaguers I had heard and read about. Here I serve in a supervisory capacity as Eddie Mathews picks out a bat.

but not as the Braves' batboy. I considered myself a rookie, and that's exactly how I felt.

I got to the Stadium early for my "debut," although not quite as early as I would have liked. Remember, I had to put in the better part of the morning in class. I rushed through my pre-game duties so fast that I had time to waste before the Braves finally took the field. I guess I just couldn't wait to begin my career as batboy.

When the game finally did get going, it developed into one of the greatest thrillers I've ever seen. Warren Spahn was pitching against Gerry Staley of the Cincinnati Redlegs, and Warren was turning in one of his finest performances. Going into the eighth inning, he had a five-hitter going and we led, 1-0. Bobby Thomson had doubled to score Billy Bruton in the first.

The eighth spelled trouble for Spahn and for us. Ted Kluszewski, the monstrous first baseman of the Redlegs, hit a two-run homer. We trailed 2-1, with only two more swings left.

Then came a thrill which wasn't duplicated all season. After Del Crandall grounded out, Chuck Tanner went to bat for Spahn. Chuck was a rookie, batting for the first time in the major leagues, and what a debut he made! He lined Staley's first pitch into the right-field bleachers for a home run.

Chuck joined a select group of ball players with that dramatic drive. Only four other ballplayers had ever hit homers as pinch hitters in their first times at bat in the

majors. As he rounded the bases, the 43,640 fans in the Stadium let out a roar that must have been heard for miles. And I think I yelled louder than anybody there.

The dramatic quality of Tanner's home run was not the only thing that made this a special moment for me. It was my first chance to shake the hand of a Milwaukee home run hitter. I had done it with the enemy the year before, when I was the visitors' batboy, but this was different. Now I could be sincere when I offered my congratulations.

I made up my mind to be the first to shake Chuck's hand. I succeeded, too, and I'll never forget the smile on his face as he reached the plate. In the two seasons I've served as the Braves' batboy, plus the short time with the visitors, I don't think I ever shook hands with a happier person.

Tanner's home run tied the score. Not only that, it started a rally which drove Staley to the showers and gave us a 4-2 victory. Certainly I couldn't have asked for a more thrilling debut!

After opening day, things settled down to a routine. It wasn't that life became dull, because it didn't. It was just that I, with that first attack of stagefright out of the way, quickly adjusted myself to the wonderful sensation of being part of a big league ball club.

I didn't go on the road with the Braves (except on one eastern trip late in the season), and the days got pretty long when they were away. However, staying home gave

me a chance to catch up on my homework, which had a tendency to get away from me while the club was in Milwaukee. I don't quite know how I did it, but I made the 90 average prescribed by Father McKenney. I was awarded first honors in scholarship, ranking ninth in a freshman class of 230.

Having fulfilled the requirement, and made both my parents and myself proud of my scholastic achievements, I was now free to concentrate on my duties as batboy. I never particularly disliked school, but under the circumstances I was mighty happy to get away from it for three months.

I put in eight or more hours every day the Braves play, and about eleven if there is a double header. That can add up to around sixty hours a week if there are no rainouts. When the Braves play at night, which they ordinarily do except on week-ends and getaway days, my workday begins at 3:30 P.M. If they play in daylight, I start at 9:30 or 10 in the morning. I usually get through about an hour and a half after the game ends, which means around midnight or 5:30 in the afternoon. Of course, if a game runs into extra innings or we have a double header, quitting time comes a little later. Don't misunderstand—I'm not complaining. I love every minute of it.

As batboy, I'm one of three assistants to Joe Taylor in the clubhouse. The others are Chad Blossfield, whose father is the Braves' assistant ticket director, and Dave Wil-

liams. Blossfield started last season as clubhouse boy and Williams as ball boy, and in midseason they traded jobs.

The first thing we do after reaching the clubhouse is to change into our work uniforms. These consist of white slacks and sport shirts and are not to be confused with the uniforms which we later wear on the field. They are considerably lighter in weight than the game suits and far better suited for the menial tasks which fall to us in the clubhouse.

In quick succession, every day, I am a laundry man, a shoe shine boy, a waiter, an errand boy, a ballplayer (shagging flies in practice), a janitor, and a messenger—all this in addition to my primary duties as batboy. How can a job get humdrum with variety like that?

Actual work begins with distribution of clothes—T-shirts, sweatshirts, shorts, and socks. We take them out of the two huge dryers at one end of the clubhouse and deliver them to the players' lockers.

Occasionally an item will vanish into thin air, and if it does, we invariably hear about it. Del Crandall, for some reason, seems to have the most trouble in this respect. When we hear him yell, "Hey, Joe," to Joe Taylor, we can expect to search every locker for his missing clothes.

The next detail is our biggest pain in the neck—shining shoes. We have to shine every pair of shoes every day, and this means about forty pairs, since several players own more than one. Two of us get stuck with this. The other distributes sanitary socks—the white socks that are worn

under the uniform socks—and puts beer and soft drinks in the cooler.

At best, cleaning shoes is an unpleasant task. But if the previous day's game has been played in the mud, it can be downright hazardous. We scrape the mud off with a machine that sends bits of dirt flying all over the place—and into our eyes. I finally started wearing sun glasses to protect my eyes, but they made it hard for me to see what I was doing. If I wasn't careful I could rip the sole of the shoe with the machine.

I also covered my face with a towel, like a bandit. This did a pretty good job of keeping my face clean, but it made it hard to breathe.

Many of the players wear two pairs of shoes a day, changing after the pregame workout to newly shined shoes for the game. Among those that do this are Frank Torre, Tanner, Thomson, Lou Sleater, Danny O'Connell, and Red Murff. Torre goes even further—if the Braves play a double header, he wears three pairs.

With quick-change artists like that around, it is easy to see how the shoes can pile up on us. Besides that, some of the players, like Spahn and Johnny Logan, often bring their sons to the park. The kids always put on uniforms (with the same numbers that their dads wear), and of course they want shiny shoes, too.

The one saving grace of this detail is that Gene Conley, our skyscraping pitcher, has only one pair of shoes. He really wears boats—size 12½, I think, and that's the

equivalent of about a 14 in regular shoes. If he had as many pairs as Torre, we might not get through in time for the ball game!

Surprisingly, Spahn wears the smallest shoe on the club—size 7½ and very narrow. He's no giant, of course, but there are several players who are smaller.

By the time this bit of drudgery is completed—at about 4:30 before a night game—the players start drifting into the clubhouse. Pafko is usually the early bird, with Torre and Joe Adcock not far behind.

The real eager beaver of the club, of course, is Coach Bob Keely. Sometimes I think he lives at the Stadium. They say he gets there at 3 o'clock for a night game and 8:30 for a day game. I wouldn't know. I have never been there in time to find out.

If a player arrives and doesn't find Keely, he always asks where Bob is. Bob takes an endless stream of ribbing for his eagerness, but he never seems to mind. I don't think anybody in baseball loves the game more. He once said to me, "I'd like to coach 'til I'm eighty. You can't beat this game of baseball."

After greeting the early arrivals, and perhaps tracking down misplaced items of wearing apparel for some of them, my partners and I turn to the task of getting baseballs autographed. I usually start around the clubhouse with one or two baseballs and wind up with eight or nine—or even a dozen.

There never seems to be any letup in the demand for

autographed balls. The players always have friends and relatives who want them, and the management also has to take care of important clients whose wives or children request them. Each ball is brand new and is signed by every member of the club.

These autographed balls are not to be confused with those sold at the ball park. The autographs on those are stamped on. These are not sold—just given away to friends and relatives.

Besides the baseballs that I personally have signed, Joe Taylor puts at least a dozen on a table in the middle of the clubhouse for the players to autograph at their leisure. When the players let their leisure stretch too far, Joe will yell out, "Come on, fellas, let's get goin' and get these balls signed. We've got a flock of orders for 'em." It ordinarily takes him two days to get a ball signed this way.

The Braves can be a playful lot, and once in a while they get gay during the autographing period. Eddie Mathews, for example, was in a clowning mood one day and splashed ink all over my clean white pants. This is just one more reason why we don't put on our baseball uniforms until later.

Bob Keely is custodian of the baseballs, and the zealousness with which he guards them makes him the butt of countless jokes. He has a lock on his baseball bag, and it is obvious that anybody who tried to swipe one would be taking his life in his hands.

Occasionally, though, a player succeeds in cracking

Keely's "iron curtain," not by filching baseballs out of the bag but by "forgetting" to return those that come into his possession in batting practice. This is how the "syndicate" got started.

The syndicate was so named for conducting a "racket" with baseballs. A player could trade two baseballs that he acquired in practice, dirty and unsigned, for one clean ball that was already autographed. This eliminated both the trouble in getting a ball signed and the waiting period invariably involved in such an operation.

Some of the players devised even shorter short-cuts, and that was where I fitted into the picture. Frank Torre, Johnny Logan, and Taylor Phillips gave me the balls they had "collected" instead of trading two for one. Then I got them autographed by the rest of the players, and for beating the "two for one" rap I occasionally got myself a tip.

I'm actually the only person who makes any money through this baseball "racket." The players give them away.

The autographing period is followed on the pregame agenda by a series of errands—taking tickets to the pass gate, cashing checks for players who have been paid for endorsing a certain laundry or lumber company, delivering practice balls from Tommy Ferguson in the visitors' clubhouse to Keely in ours, and so on.

By then it's about 5 o'clock and time to get dressed. I get out of my work clothes and into my game uniform, and there is always a bit of a thrill in this part of the routine.

Here am I, just a kid of eighteen, wearing the uniform of a major league team. The only difference is that my shirt doesn't have a number, and that to me is unimportant. I'm wearing the uniform of the Braves, number or no number.

At 5:30 I haul the bats into the dugout—fifty or sixty of them—and also the plastic helmets that most of the players wear while batting. We have a lot more than fifty or sixty bats, but the players keep all but three or four apiece in their lockers and save them for emergencies. The emergencies arise, too. We average one or two broken bats a game, and sometimes we go as high as three or four.

Henry Aaron and Joe Adcock are the champion bat breakers, and I'm not at all surprised. They hit the ball so hard that I sometimes wonder why they don't maim opposing pitchers and infielders. They crack about fifteen bats a season at home and I imagine about the same number on the road.

With bats being broken at that rate, players have to keep ordering new ones—always at the club's expense. They have to buy their own gloves and certain other equipment, but the club furnishes all bats.

Players usually get a half dozen bats at a time. Even so, their supply sometimes runs out. For instance, Adcock found himself out of bats at Brooklyn last summer; so he borrowed one from Carl Furillo of the Dodgers and hit one of the longest home runs ever clouted at Ebbets Field. It may have been *the* longest, in fact. It went clear over the

roof of the left-field upper deck, 85 feet high and 350 feet away from the plate.

Joe decided he liked Furillo's bat. "I might as well keep it," he said, "and throw those clubs of mine in the ash can."

Well, he didn't throw away his own bats (when a new shipment arrived), but he did hang onto Furillo's. Carl had a large inventory at the time and didn't mind if Joe kept one—with one provision: "Just don't go hitting any more balls over the roof," he told Joe.

Adcock carried out his end of the bargain, but while he didn't hit any more balls over the Ebbets Field roof, he hit plenty of them into the stands. Against Furillo and his Brooklyn teammates he hit thirteen all told, to tie the league record for homers in one season against one club. He almost killed them—almost, but, unfortunately for us, not quite.

When Joe finally broke the Furillo bat, after using it "only on special occasions," as he put it, he ordered more of the same type. It was a lighter model than his and it seemed to improve his hitting.

"With the lighter bat," Joe told me, "I can get it around quicker and can hit the ball where it's pitched. I don't try to pull it all the time like I used to."

Speaking of borrowing bats from rival players, others do it once in a while in a less direct manner. I notice it when I collect the bats after batting practice. One or two of ours may be missing, and in their places I may find a Stan

Musial model, or an Alvin Dark, or a Granny Hamner. This happens, inadvertently or otherwise, when players of the visiting club cluster around the batting cage shortly before the home club gets through hitting. Sometimes they just pick up the wrong bat. . . .

Warren Spahn uses the Musial model quite a bit. I think it's because Warren respects Stan so much as a hitter that he tries to pattern his own stance after Stan's. It could be because they're good friends, too, although you wouldn't know it from the way they battle each other as pitcher and hitter on the field. When Spahn pitches to Musial, you've got two of the canniest veterans in the game trying to outwit each other.

For some unknown reason, broken bats have almost the same souvenir value as baseballs. I've had people come to me before a game and ask, "If any bats are cracked tonight, will you save one for me?"

More often, of course, they hold their requests until after a game in which a bat has been broken. I never have any trouble getting somebody to take the things off my hands. Even the ushers and ground keepers are interested in souvenirs.

As I mentioned earlier, I spend most of batting practice shagging flies in the outfield. I also take an occasional turn at the plate with the pitchers and extra men before the regulars start hitting. With my 145 pounds, I don't exactly endanger the safety of the early arrivals in the bleachers. But I did hit one once that reached the left field fence

on the first bounce. You've guessed it—Keely was pitching.

After that show of power, I sort of expected somebody to come rushing out with a contract for me to sign. Nobody did, though. In fact, nobody even congratulated me. The only comment at all was from a player who shouted, "Nice goin', Keely. Now even the batboys are hitting you."

This remark was hardly a boost for my ego, but it didn't bother good old Bob Keely. He just kept on serving up the same fat nothing balls that did so much for our hitters' pregame morale.

When batting practice ends, I pick up the bats and put them in the rack at the end of the dugout. Then comes the unusual part of my day's routine known as relaxation. I get a coke out of the cooler, and if I haven't had a chance earlier, I grab a sandwich. Meanwhile I either chew the fat with my "locker neighbors," Henry Aaron and Billy Bruton, or kibitz a nearby card game.

At 7:25, exactly thirty-five minutes before game time, my colleagues and I straighten up the clubhouse and sweep the floor again if necessary. Then I fill up a bucket with ice, to be used if somebody gets hurt. So far, I've needed the ice only once in two seasons—when Gene Conley knocked out Art Fowler of Cincinnati with a line drive. But I always have it ready—just in case.

At 7:45 it's time to go out to the field. Many of the players stay in the clubhouse later than that—some of the reserves even straggle out after the game starts—but I go

out early and accompany Captain Del Crandall to the plate when he delivers the batting order to the umpires. If Del is catching that game, he gives the visiting club's line-up to me and I take it back to our manager.

For some reason, I always get a big kick out of this detail. I know it is nothing more than messenger duty, but being out there with the umpires and captains makes me feel like a "wheel."

I'm often asked what actually goes on during those pregame gatherings at home plate. People will say to me, "You can't tell me they have to discuss those same ground rules every night." Or they may say, "Who are those guys trying to kid with that meeting they hold every night?"

Perhaps they don't have to discuss the ground rules every night, but they review them anyway. After all, some manager or even an umpire (heaven forbid!) may have a weak memory. And as far as trying to kid the public, they aren't. They meet in the interests of tradition, and who can say that tradition isn't a wonderful thing?

Besides, the pregame get-together is the only chance for members of rival clubs to converse legally before a game. Fraternizing during practice is taboo, and one of the umpires is always present in the stands to enforce the rule against it. Violation is punishable by a ten-dollar fine.

I have figured out that I walk (or run) three or four miles at every game. The distance from the dugout to the plate is short enough, but I cover it a good many times. In addition, I run into the outfield to meet relief pitchers coming

in from the bullpen and relieve them of their jackets, take jackets to pitchers who are fortunate enough to get on base, and deliver the resin bag to hitters when they call for it. And none of this takes into consideration the wear and tear on my back from bending over to pick up bats.

A batboy's day (or night) does not end with the third out in the ninth inning. After I put the bats away, in a little room off the runway to the dugout, I get back into my work clothes for a fast hour of labor.

Towels have to be put into containers for dispatch to the laundry, soggy uniforms hung up in the lockers, "wet stuff" (T-shirts, socks and shorts) stuffed into the washing machines, mirrors washed, spittoons cleaned, floors mopped, shoes placed on chairs in front of the lockers—all this and sometimes more has to be done before I can jump into the shower and get ready to go home.

Even if the game ends at a reasonable hour, say 10:30, I don't get out of the clubhouse before midnight. Sometimes I don't make it before 1 o'clock in the morning. It's a long day, but never a dull one.

CHAPTER III

My "Teammates"

The Braves are pranksters. Maybe the other clubs are, too. I don't know. But it's a cinch that none of them could make life as interesting as it is with the Braves.

Don't get me wrong. Once the Braves take the field, they are deadly serious. All they think about then is winning. But off the field—whether they happen to be in the clubhouse, on a train, in a plane, or on the street—they're liable to cut up like a bunch of schoolboys.

I've heard some people say that this is the wrong way to get into the proper frame of mind for serious pennant chasing, but I don't agree. After all, there is no sense in just sitting around and worrying about the tough game or tough series ahead. In my mind, a player is a lot less likely to tighten up under pressure if he stays "loose" off the field.

Anyway, that's the way my "teammates" are. They are full of more practical jokes than a "Truth or Consequences" program. And they aren't bad baseball players,

either, as the record shows. With three second place finishes and one third since they came to Milwaukee, they have one of the best over-all records in the major leagues over that period.

Life won't be complete, of course, either for me or for the rabid fans of Milwaukee and Wisconsin, until the Braves win the National League pennant—and the World Series. But that glorious day certainly can't be far away. Remember, we wound up only a game behind the Dodgers last season, and you know what they say about the Dodgers' old men. They certainly can't keep on winning pennants much longer.

The funniest Brave of all is Danny O'Connell. He has a bookful of jokes, a hatful of card tricks, and a mental telepathy act that has had just about everybody baffled at one time or another.

I'll never forget the time Danny worked his telepathy stunt on Dave Williams, the clubhouse boy. "Think of a number between one and twenty-five," Danny said, "and I'll guess it."

He did, too, not once but four times in a row. Dave thought for a minute that we had another Houdini in our midst. Of course, he had a lot of company from time to time. Danny was downright uncanny at mind reading—this kind, anyway.

Besides his flair for comedy and magic, O'Connell is the club's No. 1 singer. Possessed of a tenor voice on the order of Eddie Fisher's, he sounds equally good on the team bus

and in the shower. Probably his best effort is a rendition of "Oh, Mein Papa," which by no coincidence was one of Fisher's big records a few years ago. It used to sound especially good when Charlie Grimm, our former manager, accompanied him on the banjo.

When it comes to practical joking, though, Danny has to take a back seat to guys like Lew Burdette, Warren Spahn, Eddie Mathews, and Bob Buhl. A teammate and his belongings just aren't safe when one of these pranksters is around. Sometimes even a sports writer or a radio broadcaster is vulnerable.

For example, Burdette pulled something on Cleon Walfoort, a *Milwaukee Journal* sports writer, that makes me laugh every time I think about it. The team was on the train from New York to Philadelphia, and Cleon was catching up on his sleep. Lew noted that his feet were crossed, and he thereupon decided to tie his shoes together.

Lew stealthily untied Cleon's shoes and then retied them—together. The train was nearing Philadelphia by that time, and Cleon showed no signs of waking up. In a few minutes the train pulled into the station, and still Cleon didn't wake up. We all stood around with disappointed looks on our faces, scared stiff that we wouldn't get to see what happened when Cleon tried to jump to his feet.

Finally, Lew could stand the suspense no longer. He began shaking his victim and telling him it was time to

get up. When Cleon did open his eyes at last, Lew and a couple of other stragglers beat a hasty and strategic retreat. As they looked back, though, they could see Cleon, still half asleep, shaking his feet in a vain and befuddled effort to get them apart.

Apparently he didn't succeed immediately. A chartered bus met us at the station to take us to the Warwick Hotel, and poor Cleon didn't make it. We knocked ourselves out laughing about the incident on the way to the hotel. As far as I know, though, nobody ever had the nerve to ask the victim how he managed to get off the train. Perhaps it was just as well. . . .

Another time, Blaine Walsh, who teams with Earl Gillespie to broadcast the Braves' games, was reading a newspaper on a bus when the paper suddenly caught on fire. One of the pranksters, probably Burdette, had lit a match to the paper while Walsh was engrossed in the latest box scores. Blaine kept right on reading, and the more he read the hotter the news got. By the time he realized what was going on, he was holding little more than a handful of fire.

"Holy smoke!" was Blaine's appropriate exclamation. He hastily dropped the flaming mess to the floor in the center of the bus, and as luck would have it, the torch landed on another section of the newspaper. The fire spread immediately, and when it threatened to get out of hand, I led the race for the nearest exit.

In the confusion of laughter and shouting, the fire-fighting brigade in the middle of the bus managed to extin-

guish the blaze. It was only fitting, too, that Ernie Johnson, the No. 1 fireman (relief specialist) of the pitching staff, had a hand in the noble work.

The bus arrived at the station just as the fire went out, but yours truly took no chances. I was off that bus before it came to a complete stop.

Setting fires is not confined to buses. Walker Cooper, the veteran catcher who was with the club in 1953 and now is a coach with the Cardinals, has been a "firebug" as long as the oldest Brave can remember.

Cooper had two favorite fire tricks when he was a Brave, and I don't imagine he has reformed since he left.

Whenever Coop would pass one of those wire trash baskets on the street, he would light a match and toss it in. Within a matter of seconds, passers-by would be thrown into a state of near panic.

Coop's other pet prank was the hot foot. The trick was so old that it had whiskers, but no one dared breathe easily when Coop was around. Almost any time and almost any place Coop happened to be, you were liable to hear the cry of anguish that comes from the victim of an efficiently applied hot foot.

I wasn't with the Braves when Cooper was, so my information is strictly hearsay. But last season, when I asked Red Schoendienst, who was then with the Cardinals, if Coop had changed any in his old age (he was 41 then), Red said, "Are you kidding? Why, just the other night he gave me a hot foot that had me running around the

clubhouse like a wild man. He gives you those double ones, and, brother, they hurt!"

Cooper sometimes went to an unusual amount of trouble to play a practical joke. Mathews told me that Coop once nailed his baseball shoes to the clubhouse floor.

"I reached over to pick up the shoes," Eddie said, "and when I brought my hand back I had nothing in it. It's a good thing I didn't pull any harder. The shoes might have come loose and I would have gone sailing across the room."

In a way, I'm glad I wasn't around at the time. I could just see myself being assigned the job of removing the nails from Mathews' shoes.

There was the time, too, that Coop's imitation of a Pullman porter was so well executed that Johnny Logan got up and dressed eight hours ahead of time. This happened on an overnight ride from New York to Pittsburgh.

Logan was already in bed when Coop and a few other late comers boarded the train. Coop pounded on Johnny's door and yelled, "Thirty minutes out!" Johnny uttered a drowsy "Okay" and immediately climbed out of bed. He put on his clothes, shoved his suitcase into the aisle, and was all set to get off the train before he discovered that it was barely midnight!

Mathews and Buhl once pulled a sleight-of-hand act that had Joe Taylor at his wit's end to figure out what had happened. Joe wanted to get something out of one of the giant trunks he keeps in the clubhouse, but to his dismay he couldn't find it. The trunk had disappeared.

"Hey fellas," Joe said. "What is this, anyway? Now a trunk gets up and walks away. This is impossible."

Joe was right. It was impossible. Mathews and Buhl had merely put the trunk on top of the lockers, and it just happened that Joe neglected to look there. When the missing item was found at last, it took five or six men to get it down.

Taylor and Mathews are close friends, but that doesn't prevent them from indulging in occasional horseplay at each other's expense. One time, for example, they got into a beer and water fight. It all started when Taylor was opening a beer for one of the players after a game. The beer and soft drink cooler happens to be near the shower room, and at this particular moment, Mathews was taking a shower. Eddie playfully threw water at Joe, and Joe retaliated by throwing beer. This proved to be a strategical error on Joe's part, since he had his clothes on at the time. Eddie doused him to the skin. The fight ended then and there as Joe stalked away to change into dry clothes.

Taylor doesn't always come out second best, however. Spahn once smeared him with shaving cream, and instead of fighting back immediately, he used the indirect method. He went to Spahn's locker and cut off the top of Spahn's baseball socks. The next day, Warren went through batting practice before he realized that there was daylight showing between his socks and his pants.

A player who wears a hat has little chance of keeping it intact for any length of time, least of all a rookie with one

of those straw summer skimmers. The best authority for this statement is Wes Covington, the young outfielder who made the big jump last year from the Class A South Atlantic League to the Braves' varsity.

Wes bought himself a natty gray hat with a blue band, and it wasn't long before Burdette and Company made it plain that he wouldn't get away with it. Finally, one day in Brooklyn, they set a match to it.

I'll say this for Wes, though. He didn't give up easily. A few days later he turned up with another hat—a tan one this time. This, of course, was asking for trouble, which came even sooner than it had the first time. You might say that Spahn ate the hat. Actually, he just bit into the brim until he ruined it. I guess that was the last straw for Covington.

While Cleon Walfoort was the butt of an amusing prank recounted earlier, a far more frequent victim among the sports writers is Lou Chapman of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. At one time or another, Lou has had his typewriter wrapped in adhesive tape, has had ink splashed on a light-colored suit, and has been tossed into the whirlpool bath with all his clothes on.

Jack Dittmer is not ordinarily classified with the practical jokers, but he does have one specialty that makes him an occasional menace in the dugout. He has a penchant for lighting shoelaces of unsuspecting teammates.

When I smell something burning during a game, I can

be pretty sure that Jack has been at it again. Sometimes, of course, I don't have to smell anything. The victim will tell me what happened by yelling that his foot has been singed.

While O'Connell gets my vote as the funniest man on the club, the real comedian of the bunch is Joe Taylor. Joe is so good that I sometimes wonder why he wastes his time being the Braves' equipment manager and assistant trainer. With his talent he should be in show business.

I told Joe this, and he came back with: "You know, I thought of that, but I decided it would be more fun to keep on eating."

Included in Joe's comedy repertoire are a Sam Spade act, a punch-drunk fighter routine, an authentic-sounding French accent, and a large collection of long and short jokes. My favorite is his imitation of Sam Spade, the fast-talking private eye of recent radio memory. One part of the routine makes me chuckle every time it comes to my mind. This is when Joe, or rather Sam Spade, says:

"I walked into the tavern and asked the bartender, Harry, if anybody had been looking for me. He said, 'Sure, a guy was in just a minute ago. He had on a purple suit, an orange necktie, and green shoes, and he had a television set strapped to his back.' I said, 'Did you notice anything strange about him?' And he answered, 'No, it could've been anybody in the crowd.'"

If the players were to pick the No. 1 "character" on the club, Taylor Phillips, the rookie pitcher from Douglas-

ville, Ga., would probably be a unanimous choice. Henry Aaron was my pick at first, but he lost his title when Phillips was brought up from Wichita in June, 1956.

Phillips is as Southern as corn pone and hominy grits. His drawl is so thick that you need an interpreter to know what he is talking about, and his conversation sounds as though it came straight out of Ring Lardner.

The boys call Phillips "T-Bone," a nickname which started out merely as "T," short for Taylor, and finally was lengthened. Steaks are not T-Bone's favorite dish, however. As he put it once, "Ah like pawk chop salad."

Phillips' most memorable quote of his rookie season followed a fine relief performance in which he beat the Phillies in the first game of a twi-night double header at Philadelphia. He had been answering reporters' questions for some time when he suddenly said, "Ah cain't tell ya any more, fellas. Ah gotta go out an' watch my ideal, Warner Spahn."

That stopped the show for the inquiring scribes. Anything that T-Bone could have said after that would have been strictly an anticlimax. And, incidentally, "Warner" Spahn showed T-Bone plenty that night—he won the two-hundredth game of his great career.

I've often heard it said that Phillips doesn't know what town he is in—and cares less. They used to say this about Aaron, too, but Henry fooled them. It turned out that he not only knew his whereabouts, but the size of his batting average as well. His figuring didn't hurt his hitting, of

course. He won the National League batting championship last season.

Among other things, T-Bone is a trusting soul. He hardly knew me when he left on his first road trip with the club, yet he let me use his car while he was gone. "Take it and go anywhere ya want," he said. "Jest so it's in one piece when ah get back."

Before that, I drove catcher Bob Roselli's car when he was on the road. I even drove it home from Florida when the club broke camp in spring training. Roselli had a 1956 Oldsmobile, and such luxury was almost too good to be true. My own car is a 1947 Mercury, with just about everything on it ready to fall apart. I'm the only person who can make it run.

Baseball players are great ones for nicknames, and the Braves are no exception. They have come up with quite an interesting assortment.

"Gabby" Jolly is so named because he seldom says anything; "Hooks" Spahn, because of his distinguished nose, rather than his ability to throw a curve; Felix "The Cat" Mantilla, because his first name is the same as the feline character in the movies; "Yatcha" Logan, because that is the Russian name for John; "Caccia" Torre, after a well-known Italian dish; "Hoss" Adcock, because of his size; "Babe" Mathews, because he is a home run hitter; "Squirrel" Burdette, because his mates consider him a bit "Squirrely"; "Clang Clang" Rice, because his running reminds one of a cumbersome fire engine; "Clark" Crone, because

his ears resemble Gable's; "The Scot" Thomson, because he was born in Glasgow, Scotland; and, of course, "T-Bone" Phillips.

Even I have a nickname—"Air" Wick. Dr. Charles Lacks, our trainer until he resigned last fall, hung it on me. I was spreading some sweet-smelling stuff around the clubhouse one day, and Doc started calling me Air Wick. The monicker stuck, and while it isn't particularly flattering, I don't mind. In fact, I'm rather proud that I have earned a nickname. It's one more thing that makes me feel like one of the boys.

When I said that Rice ran like a cumbersome fire truck, I wasn't kidding. He is easily the slowest man on the club. I'll never forget the time he raced Rube Walker of Brooklyn for the title of slowest man in the league. The race wound up in a dead heat.

The fastest Brave, of course, is Billy Bruton, who led the National League in stolen bases his first three seasons in the majors. Billy lost that title in 1956, but not because he lost any of his speed. After being on his own under Charlie Grimm, he ran only on orders once Fred Haney became manager. Besides, Haney seemed to order the steal less often than Grimm.

Joe Adcock is the strongest man on the club. I shudder to think what might have happened if he had caught Ruben Gomez when the New York Giant pitcher put on his runaway act last summer. Ruben hit Joe with a pitched ball, and after words passed between them, he hit Joe

again at much shorter range. He then took off for the safety of the clubhouse with Joe in hot but unsuccessful pursuit.

Johnny Riddle, who joined the club as a coach after Haney moved up to take Grimm's place as manager, is the team champion in two categories. He is the No. 1 father, with six children, and also the leading cigar smoker. I never asked him, but maybe there is some connection between the two.

Speaking of cigars, or rather of passing them out, a player often takes quite a ribbing if his wife presents him with a girl instead of a boy. During the off-season of 1955-'56, for example, Danny O'Connell became a father for the first time. It took a couple of weeks, however, for the news to leak out, and when Danny finally mentioned it in a letter to General Manager John Quinn, he neglected to say whether the infant was a boy or a girl.

This brought the following crack from Logan, who rooms with O'Connell on the road: "It must be a girl. If it had been a boy, he would have said so."

Logan was right. The O'Connells did have a girl. And to rub it in further, Logan's wife gave birth to a boy during the season.

The title of champion eater has been vacant since Joey Jay finished his two-year bonus term and went to the minors in midseason of 1955. I've seen some big eaters in my day, but Jay takes the cake—and everything else that's edible.

At the Carlton House in Pittsburgh, where meal prices tend to get a bit steep, the 225-pound Jay has been known to eat five dollars' worth of breakfast. His daily tab for three meals there used to run around fifteen dollars. No wonder the club started issuing a meal allowance of eight dollars a day!

Joey also was the best sleeper we had until Henry Aaron came along. On his first road trip, when he was fresh out of high school, Joey overslept and didn't get to the park until about a half-hour before game time. He was almost in tears before the merciless old-timers got through with him.

Another time, Joe fell asleep on the bus from Brooklyn to the Commodore Hotel in New York after a game. He was still sawing wood when the bus pulled up in front of the hotel; so one of the boys told the driver to take him along. Everybody tip-toed out, and the bus pulled away with Jay still fast asleep. The driver woke him up and dropped him off a block from the hotel. When he returned on foot, most of the boys were waiting for him—with appropriate remarks.

By contrast, Andy Pafko and Coach Charlie Root are the earliest risers on the club. They think nothing of being in the hotel lobby at eight o'clock in the morning.

Pafko is also the oldest player, beating Spahn by two months, and Felix Mantilla is the youngest. Joe Adcock is probably the best-dressed, but the club hasn't had a gen-

uine fashion plate since Sid Gordon and his fifty suits departed after the 1953 season.

And the happiest guy on the club? That's easy! It's Air Wick, Braves' batboy!

CHAPTER IV

The Elder Statesman

I'll have a flock of wonderful memories to treasure after my days as batboy are over, and one of the fondest of all will be my close friendship with Warren Spahn.

I don't say this just because Warren is one of the greatest pitchers in the game, or just because he was instrumental in getting me the batboy job. I say it because he's a great guy and a credit to baseball, and because knowing him has given added meaning to my association with the Braves.

You often hear and read references to Warren as the Braves' elder statesman. He doesn't exactly like the word "elder," for the simple reason that he feels too much is said and written about his age (thirty-six as of April 23, 1957). Yet the term "elder statesman" definitely is a complimentary one. Moreover, it describes perfectly the position of respect that he holds in the eyes of teammates and rivals alike.

For several years, Warren was the Braves' player repre-

sentative. As such, he represented the club in matters pertaining to player-management relations. Even after he gave up the position two years ago and Ernie Johnson was elected to take his place, he was the first man consulted when reporters wanted information about player policy.

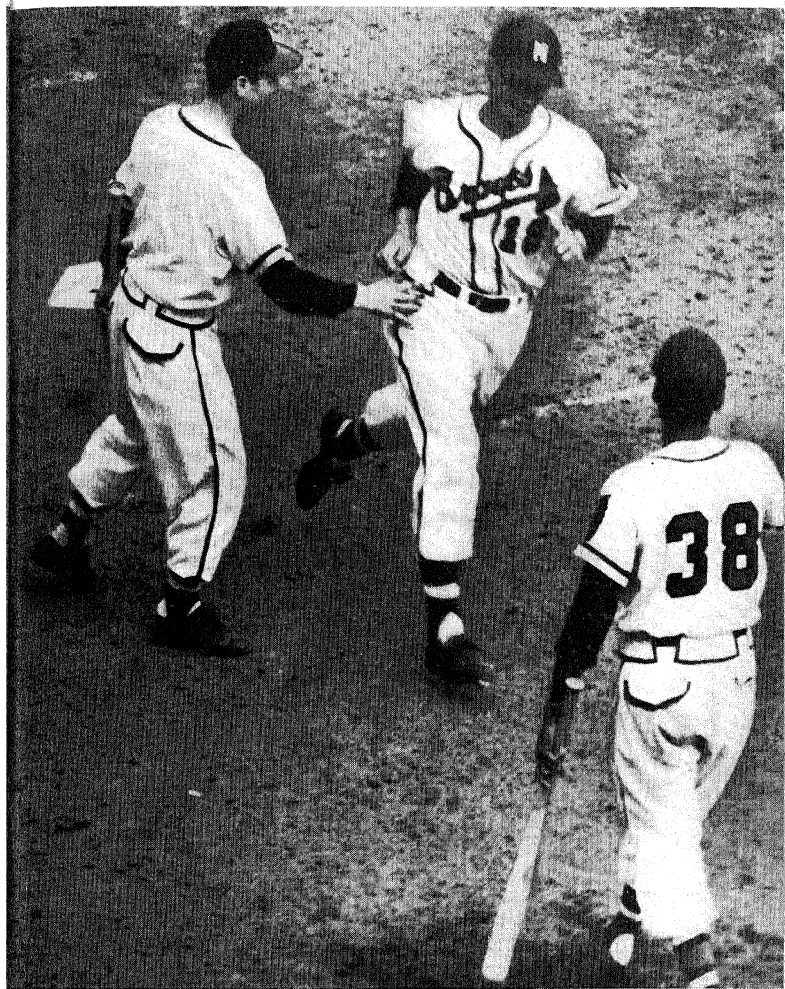
This is not meant to be derogatory to Ernie, who is a highly capable and respected representative in his own right. It just means that when you think of the Braves, you automatically think of Spahn, a member of the club since 1942 and the only present-day Brave who was on the team when it won the National League pennant in 1948.

You might expect a perennial twenty-game winner to let success go to his head, but I found out right away that Warren was not that kind of guy. As I said before, we got to know him pretty well, and every member of my family agrees that he is as modest as he is successful.

Being my Dad's tenant, Warren came over occasionally to pay the rent, and pretty soon he and Dad became close friends. About halfway through the 1953 season, he started bringing along his wife and son, Greg. They dropped in after games, for Sunday supper, etc.; and when they did, we usually got a card game going.

Warren is a "bug" for cards. He invariably plays cards on plane and train trips, and he knows about every game in the book. He even knows a few that aren't in the book, such as one he taught us recently. He calls it "Tish."

Tish is an unusual game. On the first hand, each player gets ten cards; on the second, each gets nine; on the third,



This was a moment I'll never forget. I'm shaking the hand of Chuck Tanner, who has just hit a pinch home run on the first ball pitched to him in the major leagues. Billy Bruton also is ready to greet smiling Chuck. It was opening day in 1955, my first day as the Braves' batboy, and it was my first chance to congratulate a Brave for hitting a homer. A batboy couldn't have asked for a more thrilling debut.



Coach Bob Keely's duties as custodian of the baseballs make him especially popular among the players. In addition, there isn't a harder worker nor a finer gentleman in the game.



Each catcher has his own battle regalia, or "tools of ignorance" as the old-timers used to say. Here I hang up Del Crandall's mask and chest protector and hold Del Rice's in readiness for him to use that day.



Genial Joe Taylor, equipment manager and assistant trainer, scrapes mud off the shoes while I shine. Note the fancy decoration on the clubhouse door in the background.

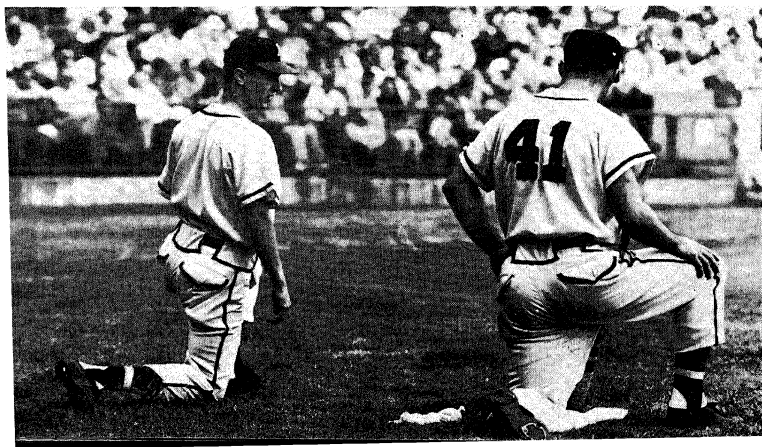
All National League players are required to wear either plastic helmets or liners in their regular caps while batting. Here I'm carrying a stack of helmets into the dugout before a game.





Johnny Logan, one of the finest shortstops in baseball, gives me a few tips on how to handle a glove.

Kneeling next to Eddie Mathews in the on-deck circle, I can't help admiring his powerful wrists and forearms that have made Eddie an outstanding home hitter.



each gets eight; until finally on the tenth, each gets only one. The first card turned up in the middle of the table is trump, and a player must make exactly the number of tricks he bids—no more, no less. The game becomes pretty exciting when it gets around to the last hand with only one card apiece.

We usually play a five-handed game—Warren and Mrs. Spahn, Mom and Dad and myself. Dad and Warren have quite a feud, which results in plenty of wisecracks and needling, and they both win their share. I don't have the statistics at hand, but my guess is that I would rate fifth in the field of five.

Like most ball players, Warren would just as soon talk about anything but baseball in his spare time. Dad realizes this and doesn't bring up the subject nearly as often as he would like to. Once in a while, though; if Warren comes over after a defeat, for instance, Dad can't resist the temptation to offer his advice.

"Do you know what you did wrong today?" Dad will ask him. He'll answer, "No, what?" And Dad will say, "You shouldn't have thrown a fast ball to so and so."

So it goes. Warren usually knows full well what he has done wrong, since he is one of the closest students of baseball on any club anywhere, but he accepts Dad's advice in the kidding spirit in which it is meant.

Sometimes, though, Dad has been a life saver to Warren. One morning, for example, the Braves were to fly to Cincinnati. Warren overslept, and when the time came to

depart, he was absent. Fortunately, the plane had been chartered; so when Warren put in a frantic call to the Braves' office, he was able to induce those in charge to delay its departure.

That solved part of the problem, but since Mrs. Spahn didn't drive, Warren still needed a ride to the airport. That's where Dad came in. Dad had told Warren to call on him whenever he needed help, and this was the time. He drove Warren to the airport and Mrs. Spahn home afterward.

At the airport, every player was aboard the plane except Spahn and Del Crandall, catcher and captain, who then was Spahn's roommate.

"Del was out on the ramp looking for Spahn," Dad said. "He looks out for his pitchers on the field and off."

When Dad got home from work that night, I asked him why the Spahns hadn't set their alarm clock.

"They did," he said, "but it didn't go off. I think Warren threw it against the wall after he lost that two-hitter the other night."

I wouldn't have blamed him if he had smashed the clock. In that game he held the Pittsburgh Pirates to two hits and struck out twelve, yet he took a 1-0 beating. To this day he calls it one of the toughest defeats of his long career.

Another time, Warren missed the chartered bus to Chicago. Again he called Dad, and again Dad came

through. He drove Warren all the way to Wrigley Field, eighty miles away, then drove back home again.

I've heard both players and sports writers say that Spahn may still be pitching when he is over forty. Besides being one of the smartest pitchers in the game, he keeps himself in topnotch condition all the time.

I remember hearing Charlie Grimm mention this one spring. "If all our pitchers were in as good condition as Spahn," he said, "we'd be all set. You don't have to watch him every minute, either, to make sure he's in shape. He takes care of that on his own."

As hard a worker as Warren is, he never did as much running as he did last spring under our new pitching coach, Charlie Root. After the first workout he said, "Listen, Charlie, we don't *run* the ball up to the plate. We just throw it."

But Warren kept right on running, and before long he admitted that Root had the right idea. He told me one time, "I always thought I did enough running in the past, but I was wrong. You can't do too much running if you really want to keep your legs in shape. Charlie is right. Running is the key to a pitcher's condition."

Warren was not giving me tips, since I had discovered at a very early age that I wasn't destined to become a big league pitcher. Warren did, however, teach me how to throw the screw ball—or maybe I should say the sinker.

This particular pitch got to be somewhat controversial

last season. There was no question of its legality, as with Lew Burdette's alleged spit ball—just a question of its identity. Spahn himself insisted that it was a sinker. Almost everybody else was sure that it was a screw ball.

One time, after Warren had beaten Cincinnati with a five-hitter, reporters were asking him and catcher Del Rice what kind of a pitch he had thrown to Wally Post for a key double play in the ninth inning.

Rice said, "He got him with a screw ball."

But Spahn quickly corrected his battery mate. "You mean a sinker," he insisted.

It went this way the rest of the season. Rival players and managers would comment about "that new screw ball Spahn's got," but Warren would steadfastly deny that he ever threw a screw ball.

"Maybe it breaks a little like a screw ball," he would say, "but I don't throw it like one. For a screw ball, you have to twist your wrist the opposite way from throwing a curve. I don't; so how can it be a screw ball?"

Sinker or screw ball, the pitch was a big factor in Spahn's great late-season comeback. He had a 6-7 record on the Fourth of July and wound up with 20-11, including a twelve-inning 2-1 heart-breaker that cost us the pennant in the final disastrous series at St. Louis. He didn't use the pitch much until late in the season because, as he put it, "I tried it a couple of years ago but forgot about it after Carl Furillo (of Brooklyn) hit one of them a mile."

My lack of major league potential didn't discourage me

from working out with the Braves before the games. It didn't even prevent me from winning several cokes from Spahn in pepper games.

A pepper game, as you probably know, involves a batter and two or three fielders. The fielders station themselves 30 or 40 feet from the batter and whoever fields the ball lobs it back to him. The batter usually takes a full swing, and at that short a distance it is a miracle that nobody gets killed.

When I'm playing, pranksters like Spahn and Burdette will stick their gloves in front of my eyes just as the ball is hit. All I can do then is grope around for the ball and hope I don't get maimed.

Once, while "blinded" in this manner, I got hit in the left forearm and had to be treated by Doc Lacks. We were in New York's Polo Grounds at the time, and I think the hitter was Dave Jolly. My arm really hurt for a while, but unlike the finger which is bent for life, the bruise soon disappeared.

Despite such shenanigans as this, and despite having my cap pulled over my eyes occasionally when I was about to make a catch, I managed to "take" Spahn for five cokes. I can't help but think that he "threw me a bone" now and then by mugging a ball that he might have caught. But even if he didn't, winning cokes in pepper games does not make a big leaguer.

Warren is continually clowning and burlesquing. (Maybe Burdette's influence rubbed off on him after they

started rooming together.) He used to do an imitation of Charlie Grimm that really was a dilly. Charlie has a rather unusual walk, with his arms and legs moving a lot like those of a robot, and Warren copied it almost perfectly. I haven't seen him do it since Charlie left as manager (June, 1956), but he'll probably come up with it again one of these days.

Another good act is his impression of a rookie reporting for spring training. He puts his cap on sideways, hooks his glove around his belt, and shuffles around with the gait of a plowboy. Then he says in a manner reminiscent of Mortimer Snerd, "Whar's the pitchin' mound? I'm the new pitcher here." This routine gets funnier every time he does it.

They say that playing the outfield is a dull job, but when I'm shagging flies during batting practice, there's never a boring moment with Spahn and Burdette around.

Things got especially lively the day a fan came onto the field during practice. He was a kid (that means he was younger than I) who had climbed over the fence in front of the left field bleachers to get a baseball.

When Spahn and Burdette spotted the trespasser, they gave chase. They pursued him across the cinder path which rims the outfield, then back onto the grass. Finally Spahn brought him down with a flying tackle in deep left center. He and Lew then took off one of the kid's shoes and started playing catch with it. When a couple of other Braves joined the game of catch, the poor guy didn't know

what to do. He kept running from one player to another without a chance in the world of regaining his shoe.

The game of keepaway might have gone on indefinitely, but the kid finally brought things to a head by stealing up behind Spahn and grabbing his glove. As soon as he started to run away with this valuable piece of merchandise, Warren worked out a trade with him and the game suddenly ended.

Spahn and Burdette don't always tease the small fry. They often pitch to such "junior Braves" as Greg Spahn; Brucie Logan, son of Johnny; and Greg Taylor, Joe's son. Those kids don't look bad, either. Brucie Logan has an especially good throwing arm.

As you might expect, Spahn is one of the highest paid players in the league. He gets \$40,000 or \$45,000 a year, and with the money he pulls in from other interests, he must have a pretty fair nest egg tucked away. His Oklahoma ranch brings in some revenue, although he runs it primarily as a hobby. Besides that, he has an interest in an oil well near his ranch, and he owns a restaurant in Boston.

With all of these holdings, and a lucrative job as well, I'm surprised the players don't call him "The Millionaire." They have ribbed him about being an oil "tycoon," but otherwise they seem to have taken his apparent wealth in stride.

Warren took over the Boston eating place a short time before the Braves moved to Milwaukee. "I thought of selling out when we got transferred," he told me, "but busi-

ness was so good that I couldn't bear to give it up. I've got a good man running it for me, and it's still bringing in good money."

As for the oil well, I think Warren sold his rights to an oil company in exchange for a percentage of the profits. So far we haven't heard of any big strike, but don't be surprised if there is one soon. Success seems to follow Warren Spahn around.

If Warren runs his ranch as a hobby, you wouldn't know it from all the livestock he has. There are cattle, sheep, goats, hogs, horses, and even a Guernsey cow. The cow was one of the many gifts he received on Warren Spahn Day at Milwaukee County Stadium in 1953. He also got a tractor that day.

Mention of Spahn Day brings to mind something that for a while promised to become a Milwaukee institution. In 1953 it seemed as though every other day was somebody's day. There was a Billy Bruton day, a Jack Dittmer day, an Andy Pafko night, a Sid Gordon night, a Sibby Sisti night, and so on. Toward the end of the season, they had a day on which everybody who hadn't had a day was honored.

The fun suddenly came to a halt, though. The Braves' management, afraid that the thing would get out of hand, strongly urged that the practice be discontinued. Since then, I think there has been only one "day"—for Joe Adcock.

I got a big surprise when my family and I visited the Spahns in Oklahoma. You might even say that I got a big shock. When Warren came out to greet us, he was hobbling around on crutches. Not being aware that he had undergone a knee operation shortly before, I asked him, "What's the matter? Did you fall off a horse?"

He politely informed me of his operation; then added, "Didn't it even make the Milwaukee papers?"

"I don't know whether it did or not," I told him. "We haven't been home since August. When did this happen? I didn't even know your knee was bothering you."

"Neither did anybody else," he said. "I hurt it in a pepper game in spring training (1953). It bothered me off and on during the season, so I went to the doctor. When he told me I'd be as good as new after an operation, I told him to go ahead."

Warren showed me the cast on his right leg. It went all the way from his thigh to his ankle. After one look at it, I began to wonder if I'd ever see him pitch again.

"Do you think it will be all right by spring?" I asked him.

"By spring?" he snapped. "I'll be ready long before that. This cast comes off in a few days, and after that there's nothing to it."

Warren went to Oklahoma City to have the cast removed. When he left, he said, "I'll drive back from there and I'll go horseback riding with you tomorrow."

Of course he didn't do either. Even an athlete of Spahn's caliber can't expect nature to work miracles. He still was on crutches when we left, almost two weeks later.

After that, I was a little bit surprised when Spahn showed up for spring training without even a limp. He may have oversold himself on the speed of his recovery, but not on its thoroughness. He won his usual twenty games that year—twenty-one to be exact, while losing twelve.

I don't know which feat was more remarkable—winning twenty-three games (against seven defeats) in 1953 after hurting his knee in spring training, or winning twenty-one in 1954 after undergoing an operation on the knee. But probably more remarkable than either was his seventeen-victory season in 1955.

On the surface, his 17-14 record gave the impression that he was going downhill. After all, he was thirty-four and getting no younger. Yet when you consider that he underwent a second knee operation in the fall of 1954—this a more serious one—you begin to realize what a job he did to win seventeen.

Warren said nothing about it, but the second operation bothered him all season in 1955. It was on his left knee, and the left leg, remember, is the key to a left-hander's push-off and follow-through. He finally talked about it in the spring of 1956, when certain experts were beginning to say he had lost his fast ball.

"I'm not giving this as an alibi," he said, "but I honestly think my fast ball went along with my left knee. I couldn't

put pressure on it and I had to change my style of pitching. Besides, I didn't dare to run much between starts because the knee bothered me so much. If I ran, I couldn't pitch, and after I got through pitching, I could hardly walk."

Warren went on to say that with his left knee back in shape he could throw his fast ball again. "I've got two good legs under me for the first time in three years," he added. "I know that's going to make a difference."

It did, too, as his 20-11 record indicated. And testimony from such experts as Stan Musial, Red Schoendienst, Dale Long, and Frank Thomas backed up his claim that he had regained his fast ball. At thirty-five, old man Spahn was showing signs of going on forever.

Speaking of Musial, he is one of Spahn's best friends in the league. The two veterans rib each other a lot, both before and during games.

One of the biggest thrills of 1956 came when Spahn won his 200th major league game. He did it in the second game of a two-night double-header at Philadelphia, beating the Phillies in twelve innings, 4-3.

Shortly before that, after he had beaten the Cardinals for his 199th victory, Warren told me that he didn't think anything could match the thrill he got from winning twenty games the first time (1947).

When the club got back from that road trip, I asked him if he still felt the same way.

"No, I was wrong," he said. "I thought winning my 200th would be an anticlimax after six twenty-game sea-

sons, but it sure wasn't. I'm convinced now that nothing a pitcher can do can compare with winning 200. It's the biggest thrill I ever had."

Why did Spahnie change his mind? He admitted that the manner in which he won No. 200 had something to do with it. He not only had to struggle through twelve innings, but he had to suffer through temporary heartbreak when the weak-hitting Ted Kazanski tied the score with a home run in the eleventh.

"When I won after that," Warren said, "it made the thrill even greater. They battled me all the way, and that's the way it should be. I wouldn't have wanted it to come easy.

"Besides, it meant a lot that my victory contributed something to our drive for the pennant. After all, that's what really counts."

I reminded him then of another thing that had made the victory a big one—his own perfect night at bat.

"You know," he answered, "I'm glad you mentioned that. Come to think of it, I guess I won the game with my bat instead of my arm."

Warren was kidding, to a certain extent at least. He had made three hits, walked twice, driven in two runs, and scored one run—the clincher. But he had also pitched a twelve-inning six-hitter; so I guess his arm was every bit as important as his bat.

That, of course, was the high point of Spahn's great

season. The low point came on June 5, the night he started against the Dodgers.

Warren had waited three years to face the Bums. He hadn't been used against them because left-handed pitchers were considered cannon fodder for Brooklyn's right-handed sluggers, and, besides, the Braves had plenty of right-handed pitchers they could use.

The last time Warren had beaten the Dodgers was in 1951; the last time he had started against them, 1953. Columnists made a big thing of it, and so did the Brooklyn players. Every time we played the Dodgers, they would rib Spahn about the fact that he never pitched against them.

I heard one of them say, "Do you get this vacation with or without pay?" And another: "It must be great to get three days off in a row."

Cracks like these, and many more, got under Spahn's skin. Finally, the night before he was to get his long-awaited chance, he said: "Writers have been calling me about it all day, but I can't see what all the excitement is about. If I do beat the Dodgers, everybody will say they're through."

Well, we never got a chance to find out what people would say. Spahn was knocked out in the second inning and lost, 6-1. I've never seen him so distressed after a defeat. At first he refused to talk to reporters, and they said they couldn't remember when he had acted like that before.

But that's the kind of competitor Spahn is. He hates to

lose even in a friendly game of cards. And next to winning a pennant for the Braves, he wants above everything else to beat the Dodgers.

"They talk about a jinx," he said one day, "but there's no jinx at all. I beat them thirteen times before this streak started. If I can just beat them once more, I'll bet I won't have any trouble after that."

Whether or not Spahn ever beats the Dodgers again, he will be remembered as one of the greatest pitchers of recent years. I'll be greatly disappointed if he doesn't make the Baseball Hall of Fame. And to think that he started out in baseball at a salary of \$80 a month!

That's right, \$80 a month. He got that when he broke in with the Bradford (Pa.) club in 1940. The story he told me about it sounds like one of those "rags to riches" tales. He said, "All I ever wanted to do was play baseball. I was just out of high school (in Buffalo, N.Y.), and while I wasn't getting much money, I was doing better than some of my friends who started out at \$15 a week. Besides, I was doing what I had always wanted to do.

"I plugged along in the minors and pretty soon they started telling me I could be one of the good ones. That's something you don't think can happen to you, but suddenly it does. Then you win twenty, and finally 200. Believe me, that's the biggest thrill in baseball."

That's the Warren Spahn I know. A 200-game winner, elder statesman of the Braves, and, above all, a man that I'm proud to call my friend!

CHAPTER V

Hammerin' Hank

When I'm old and gray and retired to a rocking chair, I'll be able to say to my grandchildren: "I wasn't the best hitter in the league, but I was next to the best."

If you don't believe me, ask Hammerin' Hank Aaron, the batting champion of the National League. He has the locker next to mine in the Braves' clubhouse.

It isn't everybody who can have the league's best hitter use his locker as a depository for empty soft drink bottles. It isn't everybody, either, who can beat the batting champion at gin rummy.

As Henry's locker neighbor, I'm mighty happy to "caddy" his soda bottles to the proper place as long as I can take him at cards. As a matter of fact, I'm mighty happy just to have him as my next-door neighbor. Besides being the best hitter in the league, he is one of the most likeable fellows I've ever met.

I'll never forget the time he broke in with the Braves.

It was in spring training of 1954, and he was pretty much of an unknown at the time. I guess the only guy in uniform who was more unknown was yours truly. He wasn't even listed on our roster.

Well, Henry wasn't an unknown for very long. In the first week of the exhibition season, during a game with the Boston Red Sox, he hit probably the longest home run ever hit at Payne Park in Sarasota, Fla. It might still be going if it hadn't hit a car in the parking lot beyond the left-field fence.

A couple of days later, he socked a home run and a triple off Curt Simmons, the fine left-hander of the Philadelphia Phillies. Everybody in the Braves organization was excited over the new slugger—except Aaron himself. Someone reminded him that in mauling Simmons, he was taking picks on a pretty fair pitcher. Hank merely shrugged his shoulders. "He didn't show me much," he said. To him, Simmons was just another pitcher, and it wasn't long before we discovered that he put every other pitcher in the same category—well, almost every other pitcher.

Henry doesn't relish the idea of batting against Robin Roberts, who until he slumped in 1956 was probably the best pitcher in baseball. "He always gets me out," Henry says. "He changes up on me and makes me look pitiful."

Henry is completely relaxed at the plate—even when he faces Roberts. In fact it was Roberts himself who said

about him one time: "He's the only hitter I know of who catches up on his sleep between pitches."

If Roberts' remark constituted a slight exaggeration, it provides a fair idea of the kind of hitter Aaron is. Henry treats them all alike, or almost alike, and while he may look terrible on any given pitch, a moment later he is liable to knock the same pitch out of the park.

Aaron is quietly confident, a man who prefers deeds to words. When he does talk, though, he usually comes up with something well worth remembering. He has an amazing knack of making cracks that stop his teammates cold.

Henry exhibited his flair for terse remarks at the 1955 dinner of the Milwaukee Chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Louis Perini, owner and president of the Braves, said some extremely kind words about Aaron, who had hit .280 that season and was being honored by the writers as the club's rookie of the year.

Henry was sitting next to Charlie Grimm. After listening carefully to what Mr. Perini said, he turned to Charlie and asked: "Do you think he means that before I sign or after I sign?"

Grimm's speaking turn came later, and when he relayed Aaron's comment to the audience, it brought down the house.

A year later, Henry was at the Baseball Writers' dinner again, this time to receive the most valuable player (Braves) award, and again he made a memorable remark.

It didn't come to light, though, until a couple of weeks later when Eddie Mathews spoke at another dinner.

Mathews said, "Henry told me something when he was in town that I think all of you should know. He said, 'I think Mr. Quinn made a mistake. He must've sent me Danny O'Connell's contract instead of mine. I gotta be worth more than that.'"

Joseph Cairnes, the Braves' executive vice-president, kept the gag going when he said, "Maybe Henry was right. I've got a hunch that the two contracts did get reversed. O'Connell signed his in an awful hurry."

Mr. Cairnes may have been kidding on the square. After all, Aaron had hit .314 that year and O'Connell only .225, so if either was dissatisfied with terms it probably would be the latter. Anyway, Henry finally got the right contract, but not until he went to spring training more than a month later.

Probably the funniest Aaron story of all is the one that Charlie Grimm used to tell about the time Commissioner Ford Frick fined the Braves and several of their players for starting spring training too early. It happened in 1955, and Henry was one of the players fined.

Everybody who got caught received a telegram from the commissioner notifying him of the fine. Since the Braves wanted to pay the fines, Grimm went from locker to locker collecting the telegrams.

When Charlie reached Henry's locker, he said,

"Where's the wire, Henry? The club is gonna pay the fine."

"What wire?" Henry asked.

"What do you mean, what wire?" Charlie shouted. "You know what wire—the one about the fine."

Henry finally got the picture. "Oh, that thing," he said. "There it is," and he pointed to a crumpled piece of yellow paper in a nearby wastebasket.

Nobody likes a good joke any better than Charlie Grimm, and by that time Charlie had all he could do to keep a straight face. But he somehow continued to make believe he was excited.

"Are you crazy, Henry?" he said. "Do you know who that's from? It's from the commissioner of baseball."

"Who's that?" Aaron asked innocently.

You see, absolutely nothing bothers Henry Aaron, not even a telegram from the top man in baseball. With a carefree attitude like that, how can a guy help but be a great hitter?

Of course Henry has the physical equipment for greatness, too. He is solidly built, packing 180 pounds on a six-foot frame; and most important of all, he has about the strongest pair of wrists I've ever seen. He waits until the ball is practically on top of him before he swings. He even has a hitch in his swing. But when he connects, the outfielders start backpedaling toward the fences.

Henry is not much for slumps. Players of his tempera-

ment—or lack of it—are not as susceptible as those who worry over their hitting. In his first two seasons with the Braves, I don't think his average fluctuated more than a few points all year.

There was a time in his third season, though, when he finally had reason to worry. He had a terrible time getting started, probably because we were rained out for a week straight in April; and when the team left on its first eastern trip, his average stood at .167.

I should say his average sat at .167. Nothing that weak could possibly stand.

Just after the club left town, Henry's wife, Barbara, announced to the public that she had given her slumping husband an ultimatum. Appearing with other players' wives on a weekly quiz program on television, she said: "I told Henry I won't let him back in the house if he isn't hitting at least .300 when he comes home."

This must have bothered Henry throughout the trip, because he raised his average to .313 before he returned home.

Maybe all he needed was a challenge—or should I say a threat? Anyway, he never had to worry again about being locked out of the house. His final average, .328, was nine points better than that of his closest rival.

If Henry doesn't make you chuckle with one of his sharp remarks, he may do it with one of his "unconscious" catches in the outfield. He strongly dislikes the term "unconscious" when applied to his defensive work. I once

heard him say to a sports writer who had used it: "Whadya mean by callin' that an unconscious catch? I was with it all the way."

True, Henry was with the ball all the way. But the word "unconscious" is about the only one that describes correctly the way he caught it. He runs with a shuffling gait, and in a way that makes everything look ridiculously easy. He usually arrives without a second to spare, no matter what the distance he has to cover.

Not only does Henry run with a shuffle; he runs flat-footed, back on his heels. As a result, some of the bench jockeys on the other clubs have dubbed him "Snowshoes," a name that he doesn't particularly like. He certainly doesn't look like a speed demon when he goes after a ball, but somehow he almost always manages to get to it.

People who don't know Henry as well as I do are liable to get the idea that he is conceited. They have usually formed their opinion from hearing him being interviewed on the radio. Actually, that's just Henry's confidence coming out. He is fully aware that he is quite a ball player, and sometimes he says things in perfect innocence that make you think he is bragging.

A good example of this was his comment on Curt Simmons' pitching after he had blasted the Philly star for two long hits the first time he ever faced him. Simmons hadn't shown him much, and he simply and honestly said so, without any intention of blowing his own horn or of belittling Simmons.

Sometimes, of course, he gives the same effect by kidding. One time, for instance, a sports writer was bringing the Braves' batting averages up to date on a train ride following a game. Aaron asked the reporter, "What am I hittin'?" Informed that his average was .280 (or whatever it was), he came back with: "Shucks, I thought I'd lead this league."

Maybe I'm wrong in assuming that Henry's remark was made in jest. Maybe it was made in utter sincerity, as the one about Simmons undoubtedly was. Because even then, in his rookie year and with his average only around .280, Henry Aaron already looked like a coming batting champion. He looked even more like it in his sophomore year, when he hit .314, and of course he reached the top as a "junior"—at the age of twenty-two.

Henry has all of the attributes of a natural athlete, the kind that does well at just about any sport under the sun. I knew that he had gone to high school in Mobile, Alabama, and one day I asked him if he had gone in for any other sports in high school.

He said, "Sure, I played about all of 'em. I played a lotta football, and I was a pretty good quarterback. I played a little basketball, at guard and forward, and some softball."

"Softball?" I asked, slightly bewildered. "What were you playing softball for?"

"'Cause we didn't have a baseball team," he explained.

"Well, how in the world did you ever get signed without playing some baseball?"

"I was on an amateur team durin' summer vacation," he replied. "One time we played an exhibition against the Indianapolis Clowns. I looked pretty good, so they offered me a contract."

The Indianapolis Clowns are in the Negro American League. Aaron joined them in 1952, when he was only eighteen, but he didn't stay long. Dewey Griggs, a scout for the Braves, heard about him and looked him over. Less than two months after he signed with the Clowns, Henry signed with the Braves.

"I signed an Evansville contract," he said, "but I couldn't make the club, so they sent me to Eau Claire instead. I—"

"Wait a minute," I said. "What do you mean you couldn't make the Evansville club?" I remembered that Aaron had burned up a Class C league with Eau Claire, hitting .338; and since Evansville was only one notch higher, I couldn't understand why the competition there was too tough.

"I guess I coulda played there," he answered, "but I was a shortstop then and they already had one—Felix Mantilla. He'd been with 'em all season, so I had to go."

Aaron and Mantilla got together again the next year at Jacksonville in Class A, but this time the problem was solved by shifting Aaron to second base.

Henry apparently was all for the move. "I guess you could say I wasn't exactly another Honus Wagner at short-stop."

He wasn't a second Eddie Collins at second base, either, but who cares about little matters like that when a guy hits .362 and drives in 125 runs? He led the South Atlantic League, more popularly known as the Sally League, in just about everything except broken bats.

Nobody was happier than Henry Aaron when the Braves made an outfielder out of him in the spring of 1954. He didn't say anything about his preference then, but he did late in the 1955 season after he had to play several games at second base.

"There's too much goin' on at second base," he said. "I get confused sometimes. I'd rather play in the outfield. A guy can get more rest out there."

Here was another remark typical of Henry Aaron. Had anybody else made it, his attitude would have been questioned. But coming from Henry, it could not be taken at face value.

Whenever Henry gets a new glove, he gives it to me to break in. I use it for a week or more when I shag flies during batting practice. After that I put it in water for a couple of days, then take it out and oil it up. The entire breaking-in process takes about two weeks.

Another of my services to Aaron is that of messenger-in-charge-of-forgotten-signs. One time we were kneeling side

by side in the on-deck circle when Henry suddenly turned to me. "What's the bunt sign?" he said.

I had an idea, but I wasn't sure, so I told him I didn't know.

"How 'bout askin' Crandall what it is? He oughtta know."

So I went back to the dugout, got the information from Captain Del, and relayed it to Henry.

"It's a tip of the cap," I told him; and while Aaron wasn't called upon to bunt, I felt that I had done a little extra to further our cause.

I pick up the signs now and then, but it's too hard to keep track of them with the club changing them all the time.

Once in a while, Aaron gets into such a mess on the field that even my messenger service can't save him. Take, for instance, the time he doubled into a double play. That's right, he doubled into a double play, and if the statement sounds incredible, consider the facts:

We were playing the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Johnny Logan was on first base. Aaron hit one of his typical line drives for two bases and Logan rounded third, bluffing a break for the plate. Aaron, assuming that John was going all the way, started toward third. Before he realized that Logan had gone back to third, it was too late for him to turn back. He was run down and tagged out.

While this was going on, Logan stepped off third to get

a better view of the play on Aaron. Before he knew it, the ball had been relayed to third and he was out, too.

If you ever wonder why a baseball manager gets ulcers, this should give you an idea. Instead of having men on second and third, we had nobody on at all. Fortunately, though, we won the game, so everybody could kid Hank and Johnny about their boner.

Then there was the time when Henry got picked off third in a game at Philadelphia. He was supposed to head home if a ground ball was hit in his direction. It was, but instead of breaking for the plate, he moved off just far enough to be caught.

"I just froze," he said afterward. "I knew I shoulda gone home to break up the double play, but the ball was hit so hard I never got movin'."

These stories of confusion on the base paths are merely a couple of isolated instances. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, Henry Aaron is in the right place at the right time.

In keeping with his unorthodox temperament, Aaron is something of an unorthodox hitter. At least he is unorthodox for a good hitter, because good hitters as a rule don't have hitches in their swings.

It doesn't work that way with ol' Henry. As the ball heads toward the plate, he pulls his bat back and makes a circle with it. But his eyes are so sharp and his wrists so quick that he gets his bat around in time anyway.

I read in the paper one time that Aaron's strike zone is

anywhere from his shoetops to the top of his head. That may have been exaggerated a little, but it's a cinch that his idea of the strike zone is a lot bigger than an umpire's.

This is fine with the umpires. Frank Secory, who works in the National League, once told me, "Aaron makes umpiring easy. Most of the hitters nowadays will let a pitch go by if it's an inch or two off the plate. Not Henry, though. He's swinging all the time. It's too bad there aren't more like him."

Actually, Henry isn't the type of hitter who swings at anything within reach. He uses a little more discrimination than that. I asked him once about his formula for hitting success, and he said, "The best way to hit is just stand up there and wait for that fast ball."

I told him I had heard that he liked curves better.

"Yeah," he said, "but I changed my mind a little."

"What about a 3-2 pitch?" I asked. "What do you look for then?"

"Listen, buddy," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "when I'm up there with three an' two on me, I just look for the baseball."

CHAPTER VI

All-Star Batboy

I was kneeling next to Johnny Logan in the on-deck circle. It was July, 1955, and the All-star Game was to be played at Milwaukee County Stadium in a few days.

Logan turned to me and asked, "Are you gonna be in the all-star game?" When I told him that I was, he said, "Gee, you're a lucky guy, Paul. It took me eight years to become an all-star, and you're one already."

Johnny was serious, too. Only one thing—playing in the World Series—could mean more to him than playing in the All-star Game. Mindful of the struggle he had before making it, he honestly was envious of me—a lowly batboy.

I had known for a week or so that I was to be the All-star batboy, but I didn't realize until that little conversation with Logan how lucky I was. I suddenly pinched myself to make sure it was true. Here I was, a big league rookie, and already in the All-star Game!

Of course, I had been hoping I would get the batboy

job ever since I learned that the game was scheduled for July 12 in Milwaukee.

For a while, I was afraid I wouldn't make it. One of the players said to me one day, "I hear they're gonna bring in an outside batboy for the All-star Game." I figured he was pulling my leg, but there was just enough uncertainty about the situation to worry me.

I thought of the possibility that Leo Durocher, who was to manage the National League All-stars because his New York Giants had won the pennant (and also the World Series) the year before, might import the Giant batboy. This upset me considerably until I realized that it merely was a figment of my imagination. "Why would they bring in an outside batboy for one day? It just doesn't make sense."

This thought reassured me somewhat. But finally, about a month before the game, I could wait no longer. I asked Joe Taylor if he knew whether I was to be the batboy.

"You are, as far as I know," he said, and that did it. While my appointment still wasn't definite, it began to look as though I was "in."

The official word came around the first of July, and for the next week and a half I was like the football team that looks past its next opponent toward the big game coming up. I realized that every regular game was a big one, actually bigger than the All-star Game, which was really just an exhibition. But there was something magical about the term "All-star." To me it meant that every player was a

little bit better than anybody else in his class and that it would pit the best ballplayers in the world against each other.

Just when I was wondering how I would last until All-star Day, the Braves started to build up a winning streak. By Saturday, just three days before the big event, they had won five in a row. If they could sweep the Sunday double-header with the Redlegs, they could bring back to earth the flagpole sitter who had vowed to stay aloft until they won seven straight games.

Sunday was such an eventful day that I almost forgot what was coming up on Tuesday. In the first game, the Braves trailed until the sixth inning, then overcame a 4-2 deficit to win behind Gene Conley, 7-4. That made it six, and just one more to go.

It was one more to go in two significant respects—one more for the flagpole sitter, whose long vigil had created all sorts of interest around town, and one more for me before the big day.

But we lost that second game. Our defense collapsed behind Chet Nichols and booted in four Cincinnati runs. In the seventh, we came from behind with four runs to tie it up, and it was Johnny Logan, with All-star dust in his eyes, who drove in the tying run. But two innings later, in the top of the ninth, Wally Post ruined everything with a two-run homer off Warren Spahn. Our one run in the bottom half wasn't enough, and the sitter had to stay on his flagpole.

Anyway, the preliminaries were out of the way now, and I could prepare for my first appearance in an All-star Game. I'm not kidding. I prepared all that evening, helping Joe Taylor decorate the clubhouse. Dave Williams and Chad Blossfield also took part in the "fun."

First, of course, we had to discharge our regular post-game duties. Next we had to clear out all the lockers except those of the Braves on the All-star squad. Finally, we had to pack the trunks for the road trip which was to begin Wednesday, the day after the All-star Game. With all this to do and decorating, too, we decided to divide the job into two sections and to return Monday morning to finish it.

By the time we got through, at noon Monday, we felt that our long hours had been very much worth while. We had put up name cards over each locker, complete with stars, and had posted a special decoration on the clubhouse door with the name of every player on it. These touches, together with an especially thorough cleaning job, made the clubhouse unrecognizable.

Joe Taylor and Tommy Ferguson, who handled the American League clubhouse, tried to outdo each other as interior decorators. The verdict of those who visited both clubhouses was a stand-off. Both Joe and Fergy did terrific jobs and drew all sorts of compliments from the players.

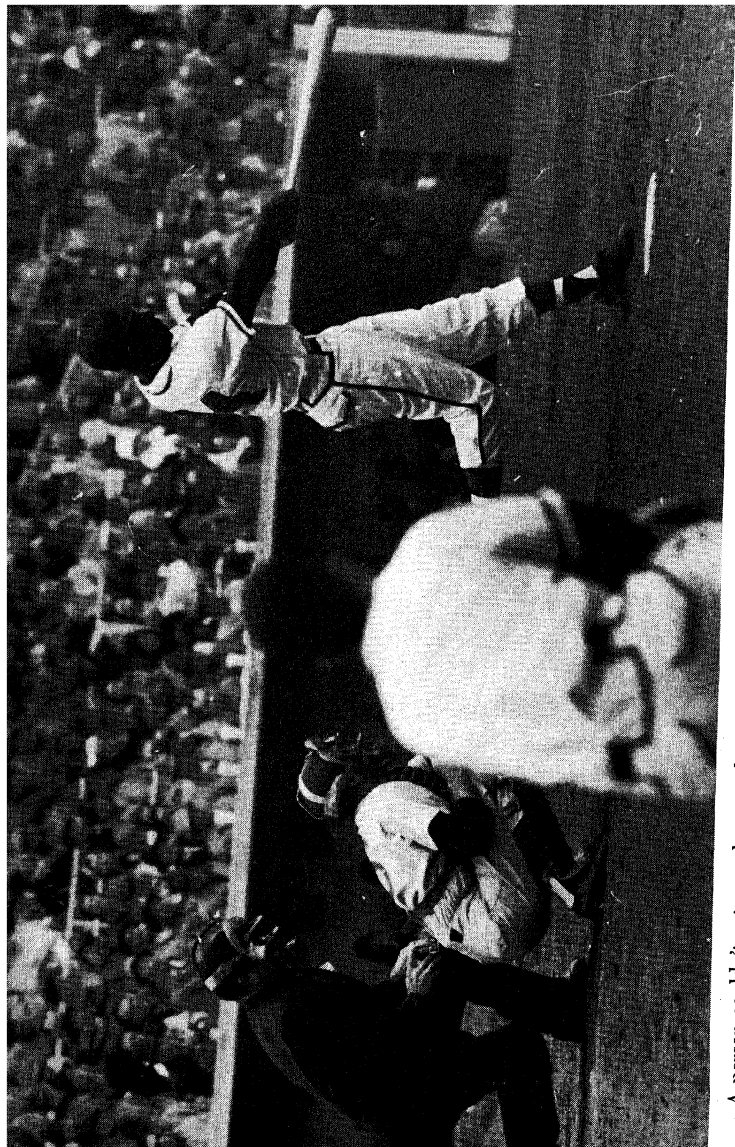
Monday afternoon, Joe suggested that Dave and I go downtown and get the duffel bags of the players who had arrived early. Hanging the uniforms in the lockers to get



One of my happiest days was July 12, 1955, when I was batboy for the National League in the All-star Game at Milwaukee County Stadium. Here I'm putting the bats in the rack at the end of the dugout before the game.

My closest friend on the team, and also one of the greatest left-handed pitchers of our time, is Warren Spahn. Here he shows me a "home run bat" in the dugout at Bradenton, Fla., where the Braves train.

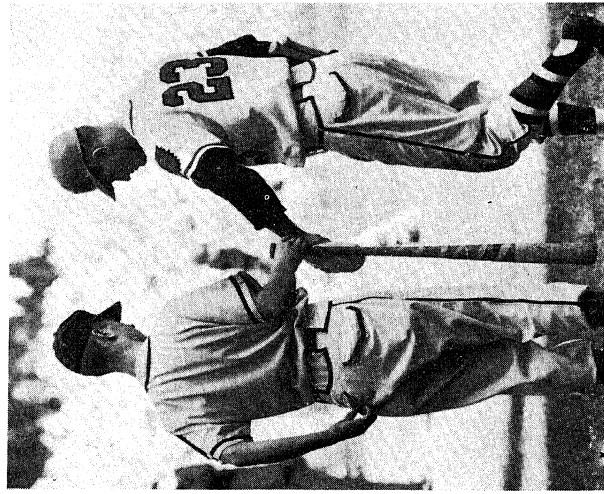




A person couldn't get any closer to the action than I do without actually playing. Here I'm almost on top of the plate as Henry Aaron lines out a base hit.



Eddie Mathews and I shake hands with Henry Aaron simultaneously as he crosses the plate after hitting a home run. This was one of two homers with which Hammerin' Hank beat Cincinnati that day and one of the twenty-six he hit in 1956.



I'm ready with the leaded bat and resin bag as Johnny Logan comes to bat for the first time in the All-star Game.



I always have a bat ready for the lead-off hitter when he comes in from the field. Here I'm handing one to Andy Pafko in a clutch game down the stretch.

rid of the wrinkles would lighten the load of work we would have on Tuesday morning.

The two of us borrowed Joe's car and drove to the Schroeder Hotel. All of the visiting clubs stay at the Schroeder when they are in town, and all of the National Leaguers were to stay there for the All-star Game. When we got there, though, the only room that answered was Stan Musial's.

Mrs. Musial answered the door, obviously surprised to see two rather dirty and sloppily dressed teen-agers. I asked her if Stan was in.

"No, he is at a player representatives' meeting downstairs," she said. "I don't think he'll be back for quite a while."

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "We just came for his duffel bag. We're with the Milwaukee ball club."

"I don't know if I should give it to you boys," she said. "How can I be sure who you are?"

Apparently we looked tougher than we realized. We didn't know what to say. Finally Dave, determined that we were going to get at least one duffel bag for our trouble, suggested to Mrs. Musial that she call Joe Taylor.

It was lucky for us that Joe didn't go into one of his comedy acts. He might have said, "Williams and Wick? Never heard of 'em." Instead, he vouched for our integrity, and we departed at last with our hard-won prize—one duffel bag!

I got to the Stadium around nine o'clock on game day,

but I still wasn't early enough to beat Bob Keely. He was to serve as batting practice and bullpen catcher, and just as always, he was on hand far ahead of anybody else.

This was a big thrill for Keely, too, even though he had been in two World Series as a coach—with the St. Louis Cardinals in 1944 and the Boston Braves in 1948.

"Isn't this something?" he said to me. "This is a day I'll never forget."

I heartily agreed, then went to my locker and put on my work clothes. Next to me, as always, was Henry Aaron, one of the Braves' five representatives on the team. Otherwise, though, there were a lot of strange faces around the clubhouse.

While emptying out the remainder of the duffel bags, I met with an amusing accident. I pulled a pair of pants out of Toothpick Sam Jones' bag, and out fell a big bunch of toothpicks that apparently had been in his pocket. It looked like a year's supply, but it probably wouldn't have lasted Toothpick Sam more than a week.

The most important part of the pregame routine, after I finished picking up Jones' toothpicks, was to get baseballs autographed. We had to have sixty dozen of them signed—720 baseballs—and that called for assembly line efficiency.

We set up a long table, which ran almost the length of the clubhouse, and planted enough chairs in front of it to accommodate every All-star. When the players arrived at 10:30, Joe informed them of our plan and they co-operated

wonderfully. As soon as they got into uniform they started signing and signing and signing.

A player signed a ball, then passed it on to the next one, and the end man dumped it into a box. Throughout the operation, incidentally, Toothpick Sam worked not with one toothpick in his mouth but with two.

In the forty-five minutes left before batting practice was to begin, we got almost every one of the 720 baseballs fully autographed.

I thought I was going to have the privilege of working out with the All-stars, as I usually do with the Braves, but Joe Taylor changed my mind for me. "I want all three of you in the clubhouse," he said. "We've got to keep this place spotless."

So we stayed in the clubhouse and kept the place spotless. I hated to miss the pregame activity on the field; I understand that's quite a thing, with players from both leagues mingling, signing more autographs, and having their pictures taken by professional and amateur photographers. Some of the players even bring their own cameras.

But the game was still the big thing, and it was yet to come. About twenty minutes before game time—considerably later than usual—I changed into battle dress and headed for the field to make my All-star debut.

At the start of the game, it looked as though the American Leaguers were going to run us out of the Stadium. Robin Roberts, the National League starter, was blasted for the second year in a row. First came two singles, then a

walk and a wild pitch. This mess added up to one run and two base runners, who promptly scored ahead of Mickey Mantle when the Yankee slugger lined a homer over the center-field fence.

We were four runs behind before we even went to bat, and with guys like Billy Pierce, Early Wynn, and Whitey Ford due to pitch for the American League, it hardly seemed worth while to go on. The outlook grew darker than ever when Pierce and Wynn each pitched three scoreless innings. With a run that they picked up in the sixth off Harvey Haddix, the Americans led, 5-0.

But County Stadium always has special shows on special occasions, as proven by the series of thrillers staged there on opening days, and this was to be no exception. This, in fact, was to be the most exciting spectacle of all.

Ford turned out to be a soft touch, and in just one and two-thirds innings we got the five runs back. We scored two in the seventh and three in the eighth, each time being helped by an error, but each time hitting Ford pretty hard. The American Leaguers finally brought in Frank Sullivan to replace Ford and he spoiled the fun.

As far as the 45,643 fans were concerned, or most of them anyway, the fact that the National League had tied the score was almost secondary to the fact that two Braves had so much to do with it. Logan singled to drive in our first run, and Aaron walked and scored in the seventh and singled home a run in the eighth.

Every time a Brave appeared at bat, the noise was deaf-

ening. The other National Leaguers were only politely applauded. Well, after all, home town fans ought to have a little loyalty. Ours in Milwaukee just have more, that's all.

In the process of falling far behind and then catching up, Lippy Leo Durocher managed himself and the National League right out of pinch hitters. Anxious to give everybody a chance to play, Leo kept substituting until he had nobody left but pitcher Luis Arroyo. He used twenty-four players, an All-star record.

At the height of the confusion, Leo almost sent in a man who had already been in the game. He wanted a pinch hitter for Don Newcombe in the seventh inning, not because Newcombe can't hit (he can), but because of the presence of a left-handed pitcher. He knew that Gene Baker was the only one available, but he got Gene mixed up with his Chicago Cub teammate, Ernie Banks.

"Go up and swing for Newcombe," Lippy said to Banks.

Ernie, who had started at shortstop and been lifted from the game an inning earlier, was stunned by the order. He was so seriously stunned, in fact, that he was all set to grab a bat before he suddenly realized that he was ineligible.

"Wait a minute, Leo," he said. "You mean Baker, not me. I played five innings already."

Baker then was delegated as the pinch hitter—our last of the game, for the simple reason that we didn't have any more.

Both teams blew chances in the ninth and the game

went into extra innings. Sullivan and Joe Nuxhall hooked up in a scoreless pitching duel which carried through the eleventh. Then came the inning that made this a game never to be forgotten.

Gene Conley, the six-foot eight-inch string bean who is fittingly called Milwaukee's only skyscraper, went in to pitch for the National League at the start of the twelfth. He faced three batters—Al Kaline, Mickey Vernon, and Al Rosen—and struck out every one of them. When he sauntered off the field, his home town fans gave him a standing ovation.

The most amazing part of big Gene's great feat was something that none of us knew at the time. He did it with a sore arm—so sore an arm that a month later he was through for the season. Imagine striking out three of the game's best hitters in succession with a bad arm! I guess it could happen only in incredible Milwaukee.

As sensational as Conley was, he was only part of the wonderful twelfth-inning story. Stan Musial was due to lead off for us, and he hadn't gotten the ball out of the infield all afternoon. The best he had done in four times up was to draw a walk.

When Stan The Man started up the dugout steps to go to the plate, Durocher stopped him and said, "Listen, Stan, it's about time you showed me something. How about it, fella? It's getting late."

Stan just grinned, as though he knew what he was going

to do, and continued plateward. As he stepped into the batter's box, he remarked to Yogi Berra, the great Yankee star who was catching for the American League: "Durocher thinks it's about time I showed him something. I think it's about time somebody ended this thing. What do you think?"

The Yogi man didn't have time to answer. Musial liked the first pitch he saw, a fast ball, and blasted it into the right-field bleachers.

What a windup to an All-star Game! Five runs behind in the seventh inning, and we end up winning it like this! I never thought I'd get excited over anything done by a non-Brave, but I was wrong. I must have jumped two feet in the air when I saw that ball heading toward the bleachers.

It was a must, of course, for me to be the first person to shake the hand of the hero. A few other people had the same idea, including most of the players and a flock of exuberant fans, but I managed to get a tie with Durocher.

The reception committee at the plate was one of the largest in baseball history. There must have been fifty of us, all with one arm or another outstretched, as Musial ran toward us. The umpire had to push us back and say, "Give him room, boys. Let him touch the plate first." Stan received such a riotous welcome that he was lucky to reach the dugout in one piece.

The Braves' clubhouse has seen some wild demonstra-

tions, but I don't think any compared with the one which followed this victory. Everybody was shouting as though we had won the World Series. It was wonderful.

Some people claim that players don't care about the All-star Game. They couldn't be more wrong. After what I saw in the park and in the clubhouse, I'm convinced that an All-star victory means as much to the players as to the league presidents—and that's plenty! Even a star like Musial, who has won just about every honor imaginable, said that he never had a bigger thrill in his life.

I guess it isn't necessary to say that a batboy named Wick felt exactly the same way. If possible, my All-star debut was even more exciting than I had anticipated. Who, for instance, could have foreseen such a dramatic finish?

And even after the game was history, there were wonderful surprises yet to come. First of all was the string of tips that came my way when the players filed out of the clubhouse. Musial and Durocher, doubtless the happiest of the happy lot, donated five dollars each to the Wick new car fund. Others made smaller but still much appreciated contributions.

Next was a beautiful silver watch with the engraving, "All-Star Game, 1955. Paul Wick." I think the fact that my name was on the watch was as important to me as the watch itself. It made me feel more than ever like a full-fledged member of the All-star squad.

It was not until four days later that I got perhaps the most treasured present of all. It was a letter from Warren

C. Giles, president of the National League, commending me for my part in the victory. The letter read as follows:

July 15, 1955

Mr. Paul Wick
Batboy, Milwaukee Braves
County Stadium
Milwaukee 13, Wis.

Dear Paul:

You may not think batboys are important to a victory, but anyone who does a good job like you did helps the team win.

You did a great job and it was a great victory for the National League.

Sincerely yours,
Warren C. Giles
President

WCG/akm

Boy, was I proud of that letter! I was convinced that in my own small way I had helped win the All-star game.

CHAPTER VII

The Long Winter

Milwaukee's winters always were long, but they grew longer than ever after I became the Braves' batboy. Now it seems like an eternity from September to April.

As a matter of fact, it is "winter" on a smaller scale whenever the Braves are on the road during the season. In a way it is even worse, because I don't have school work to keep me occupied then. It always gives me a sort of empty feeling to stay behind when the boys leave on a road trip.

At first I just sat around for lack of something worth while to do, but finally I decided to take up golf.

My uncle, Bob Wick, taught me how to play. He was champion at North Hills Country Club in 1955, so he qualified as an instructor. So far, however, my best score for eighteen holes is 88.

At one stage—I think it was the day after I shot the 88—I had visions of becoming a first-rate golfer. I decided to go all the way and take lessons from Blackie Nelthorpe,

the professional at Westmoor Country Club. But I soon found that I couldn't take lessons regularly and still fill my duties at the Stadium; so the lessons had to go.

My chief trouble is slicing my drives. Practice at a driving range seems to be helping, though, and in due time I may be able to hit a ball straight down the fairway. If so, I may get into the low eighties some day. My short game and putting aren't too bad.

Three other Marquette high students and I have a regular foursome at Westmoor. Brand Spangenberg and I usually play against Bill Topp and Joe Maly, and we usually win unless our opponents get my mind off the game by talking about the Braves. If the Braves happen to be playing that afternoon, I find it very difficult to concentrate on golf.

Once I played in a tournament—sort of a tournament, anyway. It was the annual Savings and Loan Association picnic, which I attended as my dad's guest.

Dad lured me into the golf competition by saying, "We've got some dandy prizes to give away." I asked what kind of prizes, and he said, "Oh, a lot of 'em—baseball tickets, . . ."

I interrupted him before he could go any farther. "What would I do with baseball tickets?" I asked him.

"Don't be like that," he said. "Just remember how lucky you are that you don't have to worry about such things. A lot of other people do. And besides, if you win, you can always donate the prize to somebody else."

That sounded logical enough, and so did the chance to beat some of the old-timers; so I entered. Of course, when I talk about beating old-timers, I talk about beating them with the benefit of a handicap. I got a healthy one, too—a whopping 28—but with the 98 I scored I didn't have to give away any baseball tickets.

After that, the activity at the picnic turned to cards—sheepshead for me—and I got so engrossed in the game that I almost forgot that the Braves were coming back to town that night. I had Taylor Phillips' car and had to meet him at the airport. By the time I got there, the plane had landed and the players were waiting for their baggage.

Taylor said to me, "Whar've ya been, boy?" in his inimitable Georgia drawl. I got such a kick out of the way he said it that I never got around to giving him an answer.

I don't neglect baseball completely when the Braves are out of town. I play every once in a while at Wick Field with a bunch of the boys from high school.

Wick Field was named after my grandfather, Paul Wick the First (I'm Paul the Second). An alderman, he took over the land when it was a city dump and transformed it into a playground with facilities for baseball, football, and tennis. I never saw him—he died a month before I was born—but I know he must have been a wonderful man.

The highlight of my "off-season" within the season is the annual grudge game between the Ground Crew Slobs and the Front Office All-Stars. I play third base for the Slobs—and by the way, I wonder who gave us that name?

Probably the most memorable game in this momentous series was played September 6, 1955. The Public Relations department of the Braves even put out a program:

FRONT OFFICE ALL-STARS

	<i>Pos.</i>	<i>HR</i>	<i>RBI</i>	<i>Pct.</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. Don Davidson, Public Relations Director	2B	1	1	.333	Has no official batting average; with club only eight years.
2. Bob Allen, Statistician	SS	8	75	.334	All ready to relieve Mullen.
3. Roland Hemond, Asst. Farm Director	C	30	101	.327	Doesn't want to catch whole game.
4. Paul Waner, Roving Batting Coach and Member of Baseball Hall of Fame	1B	1	2	.263	Once played professional ball.
5. Red Wyczawski, Asst. Public Relations Director	CF	28	121	.356	Best player on team according to Wyczawski.
6. Frank Leary, Asst. Treasurer	3B	61	191	.424	Can't hit, but best fielder on team; also has money.
7. Bill Eberly, Ticket Director	RF	16	98	.302	This is one game that isn't a sellout.
8. Charlie Blossfield, Asst. Ticket Director	LF	—	—	—	Our secret weapon.
9. John Mullen, Farm Director	P	34	145	.368	Be careful—he may get someone out.

GROUND CREW SLOBS

1. Schaeffer	1B
2. Warner	CF
3. Klohn	SS
4. Higgins	C

5. Blossfield	2B	(Blossfield's son)
6. Lewer, L.	RF	
7. Wick	3B	(the batboy)
8. Ferguson	P	
9. Williams	LF	(not Ted)

As you can see, the poor Ground Crew Slobs were lucky to make the program. All that information about the Front Office All-Stars, including batting averages, and they didn't even use our first names!

This deliberate slight made us so mad that we beat the All-Stars even worse than usual. We had too much raw power, including my single and two walks. We had too much defense, too, including my perfect plays on two easy ground balls.

One of the features of the classic was the use (occasionally) of frozen baseballs. Kept refrigerated until just before game time, these baseballs were harder than the Rock of Gibraltar. When a player caught a throw or a hard-hit ball, if he happened to be capable of catching anything besides a cold, he got the sensation of having his hand severed at the wrist. When he hit the ball, it sounded as though he had hit a rock. I don't know how it felt—the only ball I hit had thawed out before it got to the plate.

Another innovation was introduced by Joe Taylor. He put caps—not baseball caps, but the kind that make noise—in one of the bats. I don't know exactly how he took the bat apart and put it together again, but he did a terrific job of it. Whenever the bat hit the ball, it sounded like a rifle shot.

With that afternoon of clowning, my summer vacation from school came to a regrettable end. I started my sophomore year the following day, September 7. Once again I had the problem of combining school with my job.

On the second day of school, I woke up with an upset stomach and didn't get to either school or the ball game. It was the first game I had missed in two seasons, and it just about killed me to sit home and listen to it on the radio. The score didn't help, either. We got licked by the Dodgers, 10-2.

The illness not only ruined my perfect attendance record at the Stadium but that at school as well. I hadn't missed a day in my freshman year. Of course I didn't feel quite as sad about that.

Chad Blossfield filled in for me as batboy and the players said he did a good job. I just hoped he wasn't too good.

I also missed school the next day, so Dad wrote a letter to Father Boyle, the assistant principal. Besides explaining my absence from school, he practically promised to pull me off the batboy's job at the end of the season. He wrote as follows:

September 9, 1955

Fr. Jerome T. Boyle, S.J.
3401 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, Wis.

Dear Father:

I feel very bad about the fact that after completing his freshman year without an absence, Paul had to start off

by missing Thursday, the second day of school, as well as today, Friday. He was sicker than a dog Wednesday midnight after he came home from the ball park and we kept him both from school and his batboy job Thursday afternoon. That is the first game he has missed.

With the homework time of $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours it is almost impossible to do well at school and at the Braves' ball park, and I think I will take your fatherly advice and retire him from the Braves' job at the conclusion of the year, September 19.

He was conscientious enough about it to get on the phone and contact his new classmates and begin to do the work assigned and I am sure he will catch up by Monday morning.

Sincerely,
Warren F. Wick

With that letter, and with a few words to me at the same time, Dad began his campaign to induce me to quit as batboy. Fortunately, his campaign has been only spasmodic. He has brought up the subject at intervals afterward, usually when certain school work had gone begging, but I always have managed to win my case. Or maybe it would be more accurate to state that Dad always has weakened when spring came.

Once the season ended, and the Braves finished second to the Dodgers, I started an all-out effort to haul my grades back to normal. I had to get going if I was going to keep that 90 average, because my baseball job as usual had subtracted many hours from my study time.

I didn't quite reach the 90 mark, but I was close

enough. I finished with an 88, which wasn't bad considering that I played basketball in the winter besides being batboy in the fall and spring.

My junior year, which started in September, 1956, was my busiest ever. One reason was that we had a new basketball coach, Mal Dodds, who kept us at practice much later than Jim Harding had in the past. I sometimes didn't get home for supper until about 7:30. Another was that I took the toughest course the school offered.

Because I ranked in the top 35 of our class of 220, I took what they call the honors course. It consisted of Greek (which none of the other 185 students took), English, Latin, Physics, Advanced Algebra, and Religion.

Greek wasn't exactly Greek to me. It came easily. Physics was the real toughie, although for some reason I got higher grades in it than I did in English. I sometimes wondered how I passed it.

With only two study halls a week, I usually load myself down with seven or eight books when I go home. I try to study two and a half to three hours a night, but that isn't always feasible. If the Braves have a night game, for instance, I take at least one book to the Stadium and try to cram in some studying between pregame duties. Then, if necessary, I may get up an hour early in the morning. During basketball season I get desperately sleepy after dinner. Often I have to give up and hit the hay before my two and a half hours are up.

Basketball actually takes more time from my studies than does my batboy's job. We start out on October 1 by

training with the cross-country team. That involves calisthenics as well as running over hill and dale around Marquette University Stadium. After a month of that we begin regular practice, which means a lot of cold dinners and late studying. My family usually waits dinner for me, though, and that's something I really appreciate.

I made the basketball squad as a sophomore, but with a new coach I had to make it all over again as a junior. The coach cut me off the squad at first, then gave me another chance, and, believe it or not, I eventually made the first string. I was even a hero one day, sinking three free throws to win a game in the closing minutes. My name is not listed among the leading scorers in the Milwaukee Catholic Conference, but there's always next year—or at least that's what I keep telling myself.

In addition to fulfilling the usual duties at home, I used to be pressed into service as a baby sitter. Now we don't need one, since my sister Barbara is eleven, but I still draw extra household responsibilities on occasion. Last fall, for example, Dad went to a convention in Philadelphia and took Mom with him. That left me as head of the house for a week.

I went into a huddle with Mom, before she and Dad left, on the matter of meals. "What are we going to eat?" I asked my mother. "We certainly can't go out every night."

"Don't worry," she said. "I'll give you a list of meals, and all you have to do is put them on the stove."

It didn't sound as simple as it turned out to be. Mom planned a complete meal schedule for us, and either Ginny

or I put them on the stove. We didn't tackle anything like steak or pork tenderloin, but we got by very well on frozen chicken, hamburger, etc. Moreover, we solved the fish problem on Friday night by going to my aunt's house.

Among my other off-season activities are bowling, ice skating, attending movies and, once in a while, going out on dates. I usually take in the school dances, although like most boys I'm hardly an avid dancer, but I missed out on the big football hop last fall. Just a few hours before the dance, the girl I was supposed to take broke the date. She had a good reason—an appendectomy.

The highlight of the school year is spring vacation, and I don't mean that merely because I don't have to go to class for a week. That's when Dad and I go to Florida for spring training. We have made a regular practice of it since that first lucky year when I stumbled into the job of batboy.

Technically I'm a visitor at Bradenton, but I don't sit in the stands. I put on a uniform and serve as batboy, just as though it were the middle of the regular season. And why not? Even a batboy can use a little spring training.

There isn't much time left to sweat out by the time we get back from Florida. A week or so afterward, I begin the pleasant task of getting the clubhouse at the Stadium ready for the Braves' return.

The whole world seems beautiful at that time of year—even my school work. After six and a half long months, the Braves are coming home. Winter is over at last.

CHAPTER VIII

My Two Managers

As long as I can remember, and a long time before that, Charlie Grimm was known as "Jolly Cholly." He played a left-handed banjo, sang in a German dialect, told jokes, and generally got a tremendous kick out of life.

That was the Charlie Grimm I met when I joined the Braves in 1954. From the time Warren Spahn introduced me to him, he treated me as though he had known me all his life. He called me "Paulie," kidded me a lot, and in many other ways showed why he got his famous nickname.

It wasn't Jolly Cholly, though, who managed the Braves for the first two months of the 1956 season. It was a man worried about his job, worried because things were not going right and because of prevailing rumors that he would have to win "or else."

Charlie didn't give any outward signs of strain or worry. He still told a joke once in a while, he still burst into song on one or two occasions, and he even had one of the mock

"heart attacks" that made him such a colorful figure on the coaching lines throughout his managerial career. But if you watched him closely, you could see that something was bothering him. He wasn't quite the easy-going Charlie Grimm of old.

Considering the pressure he was under, it doubtless was all for the best when Charlie resigned on June 16. Fred Haney took over with the club in fifth place and came within one game of winning the National League pennant. Charlie, meanwhile, got some badly needed relaxation and rest while being well paid not to manage the Braves for the balance of the season. And in October he went back to the Chicago Cubs, whom he had served before as a player, manager, coach, and vice-president. I guess they have come to look upon him as their own.

For the second time in his forty-year baseball career, Grimm is vice-president of the Cubs. He quit the first time because, as he put it, "my hands weren't meant to carry a briefcase." This time, though, it's different. He says he is content now to leave managing to the younger fellows. "Now that I'm a little older," he said after leaving the Braves, "a briefcase might fit after all."

It was tough to see Charlie go, and in saying this I don't mean for a minute to be derogatory to Fred Haney, but it's wonderful that Charlie has a fine new job and will remain in baseball. All of us wish him worlds of luck—except of course, when his Cubs play the Braves.

The first real inkling that Grimm's job might be in

jeopardy came in October of 1955, eight full months before the ax fell. At that time, Milton Richman of the United Press wrote that if the Braves weren't on top or close to it by June 15, Grimm would be out. He missed the date by just one day.

According to some of the players, Richman's story weighed heavily on Grimm's mind from the start of spring training. When I was in Bradenton on my spring vacation, one of them told me, "Charlie seems to be different. I can't exactly put my finger on it, but he must be worried about all those rumors."

Rumors or no rumors, the Braves got off to a good start and led the National League when they came home on June 1 for a two-week stand at County Stadium. Then came the straw that broke Grimm's managerial back—a disastrous home stand which dumped the club all the way from first place to fifth.

In those two horrible weeks at home, we lost ten of fifteen games. To make matters even worse, the Braves usually looked bad in losing. Their hitting, fielding, and pitching all collapsed at the same time.

As the situation worsened, Charlie gave more and more evidence of strain and worry. He seemed much more quiet and serious—seemed to bear down harder, as though he considered every game a "must."

Rumors started to fly around town, and I heard them wherever I went. With the rumors came complaints, and with the complaints came questions. At school, at church,

at the barber shop, everywhere I went, I was questioned by unhappy fans. They asked, "What's wrong with the Braves?" . . . "Is it Grimm's fault?" . . . "Is Grimm on his way out?"

Whatever the question, and there were many more than those three, my answer was much the same. I would say with a helpless air, "I wish I knew" or "You know as much about the situation as I do."

In spite of all this talk, I never gave serious thought to the idea that Charlie might lose his job. I guess I was misled by the fact that, even in our terrible slump, we were only a couple of games out of first place. One afternoon, however, there was a strong indication that the lid was about to pop.

It was a Saturday, June 9, and the Braves had been at their absolute worst the night before. They had kicked away a game to the New York Giants and had looked pitiful in doing it. Doubtless with this in mind, as well as several other poor performances in the previous week, General Manager John Quinn came to the clubhouse for the first time in my experience as batboy.

I always had understood that Mr. Quinn made it a practice to stay away from the clubhouse, and I thought of this as soon as I saw him come in. I had a good idea that something big was in the wind, and I was right.

Mr. Quinn went over to Joe Taylor and told him he wanted to have a closed meeting—players only. So Joe asked everybody except the players to leave, and that of

course included me. I went outside and knew nothing about what went on until I saw Mr. Quinn coming out. He had a grim, almost frozen look on his face. I didn't have to be a mental telepathy expert to know that the session had been anything but a pleasant one.

When I returned to the clubhouse, after Mr. Quinn had left, I felt as though I was entering a mortuary. Nobody said a word. I put out a few feeler questions, hoping forlornly to find out what had gone on, but the silence continued. It was obvious that the players had pledged complete secrecy, which of course was as it should have been.

It wasn't until after Haney replaced Grimm as manager that I found out what had happened behind that locked clubhouse door.

First Mr. Quinn, who had received Grimm's permission to talk to the players, bawled out the boys for "not hustling," for "letting down the fans," and "for letting down the club as well."

Then, after Mr. Quinn left, Charlie got up and made a speech of his own. According to the report, he was as angry as he had ever been in his life. He told the players: "I may not be here much longer, but as long as I am, nobody is going to talk to you like that. You are hustling; you're hustling so much that you're pressing. I know darn well you want to win as much as anybody."

Charlie's words obviously had something to do with the team's performance that afternoon. The boys showed more

pep and enthusiasm on the field than they had in many games. And they beat the New York Giants, too, 4-0, on Lew Burdette's four-hitter.

But the resurgence lasted just one day. We lost on Sunday, again on Monday night, and again on Tuesday night. That made it ten defeats in thirteen games on the home stand, and the bottom was gradually falling out from under Charlie Grimm.

The players began to talk among themselves about the "grim" situation. One said to me, "What do you hear about Charlie?" Another said, "It looks like he's out, doesn't it?"

They knew as much about it as I did—more, in fact, considering that they had been present when Mr. Quinn gave his clubhouse talk. They weren't the only ones discussing the matter, either. Rumors started spreading to the effect that Grimm was about to get the ax. But the players were more deeply concerned than the public for one big reason—they knew Charlie and liked and respected him.

As a matter of fact, some of the boys thought the fans had been a little unfair during that horrible home stand. There had been considerable booing, as there usually is when a club does everything wrong, and it didn't sit too well with some of the players.

One of them told me, "We're just not getting the breaks, that's all. You've got to have a break once in a while to win. What kind of fans are these, anyway?"

Actually, the fans were not altogether in the wrong. I know how the players felt, and I certainly don't approve of booing as a general practice, but this much should be pointed out: John Q. Fan pays his \$1.85 with the idea of getting \$1.85 worth of entertainment, and if he isn't satisfied, nobody can deny him the right to disapprove.

It turned out that Grimm, still boiling from the bawling-out given his players by Mr. Quinn, had gone to the front office a few days later and asked where he stood. He got no satisfaction and continued to manage, neither he nor the players knowing from one day to the next where he stood.

The club finished the home stay with two victories, making its record 5-10, but it was too late. When the boys left for Brooklyn on the morning of June 15, those of us who stayed behind felt that a blowup was close at hand. We didn't realize how close it was—only a little more than twenty-four hours away.

On the following morning, Dad came into the house with a paper announcing Grimm's imminent dismissal. I wasn't surprised, and I wasn't happy either. After all, no matter what personalities are involved, you can't help but feel sad when a man loses his job.

I hardly got out of the house that day before the questions began flying my way:

"Do you think Grimm was really to blame?"

"What do you know about Fred Haney?"

"Do you think they'll try to get Leo Durocher?"

The official announcement came out that night, but for many days thereafter I was bombarded with questions I couldn't answer. My friends think I have all the inside dope on the Braves, but many a time I don't know any more about what goes on than they do. This certainly was one of those times.

It was a much happier team that returned from a long road trip almost three weeks later. The Braves were back in first place, mainly because they had won their first eleven games under Haney for the longest victory streak in Milwaukee baseball history.

It is one of the mysteries of baseball that a change in managers often sends a club off on a winning streak. In the case of the Braves, I think the revival could be attributed to one major factor—release from mental tension. They finally relaxed after worrying and fretting through Grimm's last trying days as manager.

True, there were rumors that Haney also would be out if the Braves didn't win the pennant. Haney himself admitted that he wasn't sure where he stood. But the boys at least knew then that they had a manager for the rest of the season, and that helped give them a certain amount of security.

The managerial change had been almost forgotten by this time, particularly since the Braves had won eleven in a row, but I still was interested in finding out more about it. I asked Warren Spahn.

"Well, we all knew that Charlie was on the spot," he

said. "It was obvious from spring training on. He was jittery, and his jitters couldn't help but rub off on the players. It was like being suspended in midair."

"Do you think that made him take his pitchers out sooner this year than in the past?" I said.

"Definitely," Warren replied. "He was trying harder than ever to make good and keep his job, and as soon as a pitcher got into trouble, he took him out. That put us pitchers under more pressure. It got so we looked over to the dugout as soon as we allowed a couple hits. We expected to get the hook any minute."

Coach Charlie Root noticed the same thing. He said, "Spahnie's right about that tension. I've known Charlie a long time, and I noticed a difference in him the minute I joined the club in spring training. He obviously was under pressure, and it had an effect on the whole club."

I wanted to know if Root still went to the mound to take out pitchers, as he had for Grimm.

"No, Fred's doing that himself," Root answered. "It was Charlie's idea to have me do it this year. He would say, 'Go get him,' and I'd go. I don't know why he started it after all these years, but I suppose it was just another thing he did because he was trying so hard to produce."

So much for the post-mortems on Manager Charlie Grimm. I had a new manager now, Fred Haney, and like anybody who has had a change of bosses, I wondered how long it would take me to become adjusted.

I soon found out that adjustment would be easy. Haney

was more strict than Grimm—he censured players for mistakes, he held more meetings, had more rules. He also was a hard man for the players to get close to—he made it clear that he was the boss and the players could not help but respect him for that. The big thing, though, was this plain and simple fact: Fred Haney was (and is) a nice guy and as fair as they come.

Another thing about Fred—and you don't notice it until you get to know him pretty well—is his sense of humor. He likes a joke as well as anybody, Grimm included, and he is equally happy whether he happens to be on the telling or the listening end.

Fred even manages to inject humor into his managing once in a while. He has an uncanny knack of being able to call a player down and send the guy away laughing.

One time, for example, Felix Mantilla failed twice to bunt and then hit a triple. When The Cat arrived at third base, Fred said to him, "You're lucky you can hit, Felix, 'cause you sure can't bunt."

Felix not only took the remark in the proper spirit. He made his next bunt a successful one.

I remember another remark that Haney made to Henry Aaron after Henry and Billy Bruton had gummed up a fly ball. When Henry returned to the dugout after the inning ended, Fred quipped, "Say, Henry, when do you guys go into the mambo?"

Then there was the time Joe Adcock ran past Andy Pafko on the baselines in a game at Chicago. The bases

were loaded, Pafko being the man on first, when Adcock hit a short fly to right field. Walt Moryn, the Chicago Cubs' right fielder, dropped the ball after a long run, and the panic was on.

Pafko had held up, thinking that the ball would be caught, and Adcock went by him like an express train passing a slow freight. Once Andy saw what had happened, he took out after Joe and the two put on quite a foot race. Joe stayed in front, though, and finally slid into third base. It was only then that he realized the "rock" he had pulled.

Afterward, Haney remarked, "The way they were running, I didn't dare tear up my mutuel ticket. It looked like a photo-finish for a while."

Fred was less charitable about Pafko's contribution to the comedy of errors, which consisted of getting himself run down and tagged out between second and third.

"What Adcock did can happen in the heat of a game," he explained. "I can't criticize him too much for that. But we still would have had a chance for two more runs if Pafko had stayed on second."

Fortunately, the Braves won the game. Had they lost, even Haney would have found it difficult to find any humor in the incident. As it was, though, the thing reminded him of his three trying years as manager of the then hopeless Pittsburgh Pirates.

"Many's the time," he recalled, "that I felt like slitting my throat after we blew a close game. You know, they (the Pirates) didn't look too bad against the Braves. They

even split the season series last year (1955). But those were only twenty-two games. You should have seen the rest of 'em!

"Take one game with the Giants, for instance. We had a two-run lead in the last of the ninth inning and they had men on first and second with two out. A guy hit a little dribbler in front of the plate and I figured the game was over. So what happened? Shepard (Pirate catcher) picked up the ball and threw it into right field.

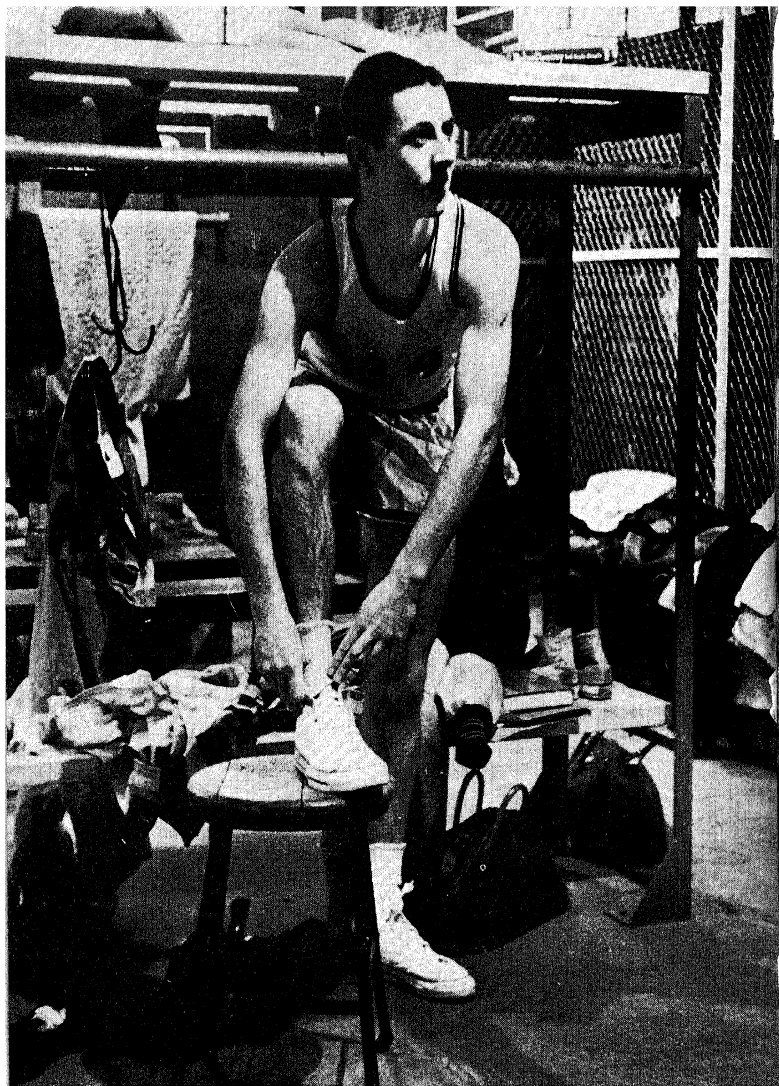
"The ball bounced around for a while, as it often did in our outfield, and pretty soon one run was in and the guy from first was going around third. When the throw finally got to the plate, Shepard realized he couldn't get the guy who was crossing the plate with the tying run, but he noticed that the man who had hit the ball was heading toward third. He should have had him easily, but what did he do? He threw the ball into left field and the winning run scored!

"Can you imagine it? They get three runs on a ball that didn't go more than twenty feet. I thought that was the end, but it wasn't. A New York sports writer came into the clubhouse afterward and started asking questions. He just asked one: 'What do you think of the Giants?' That was all. I got so mad that I threw him out of the clubhouse."

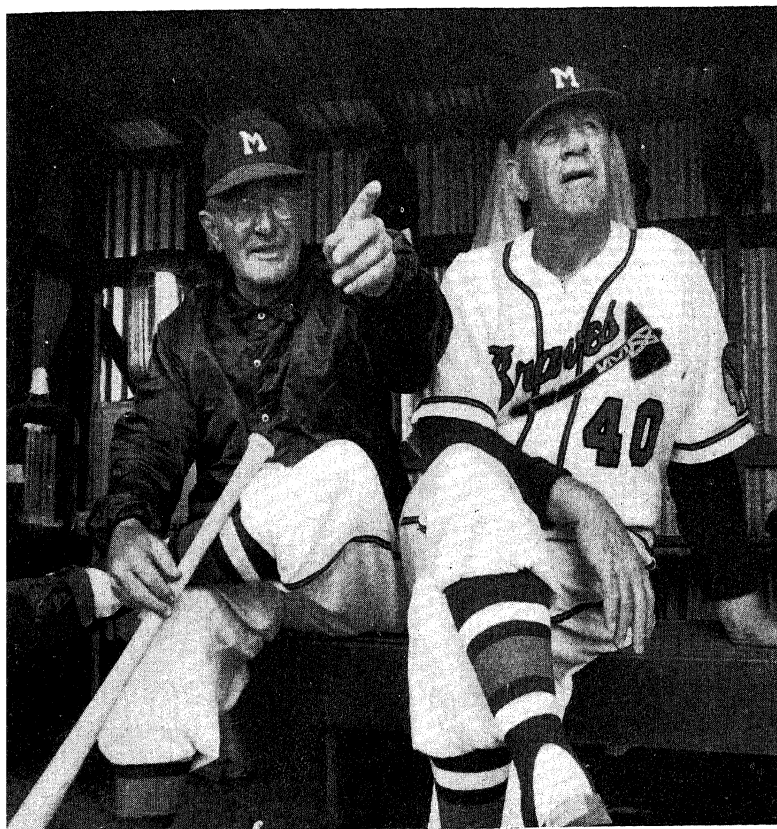
I remembered reading about the time Gene Freese cost the Pirates a ball game by pulling a "Fred Merkle." A "Merkle," named for an old-time player with the Giants and



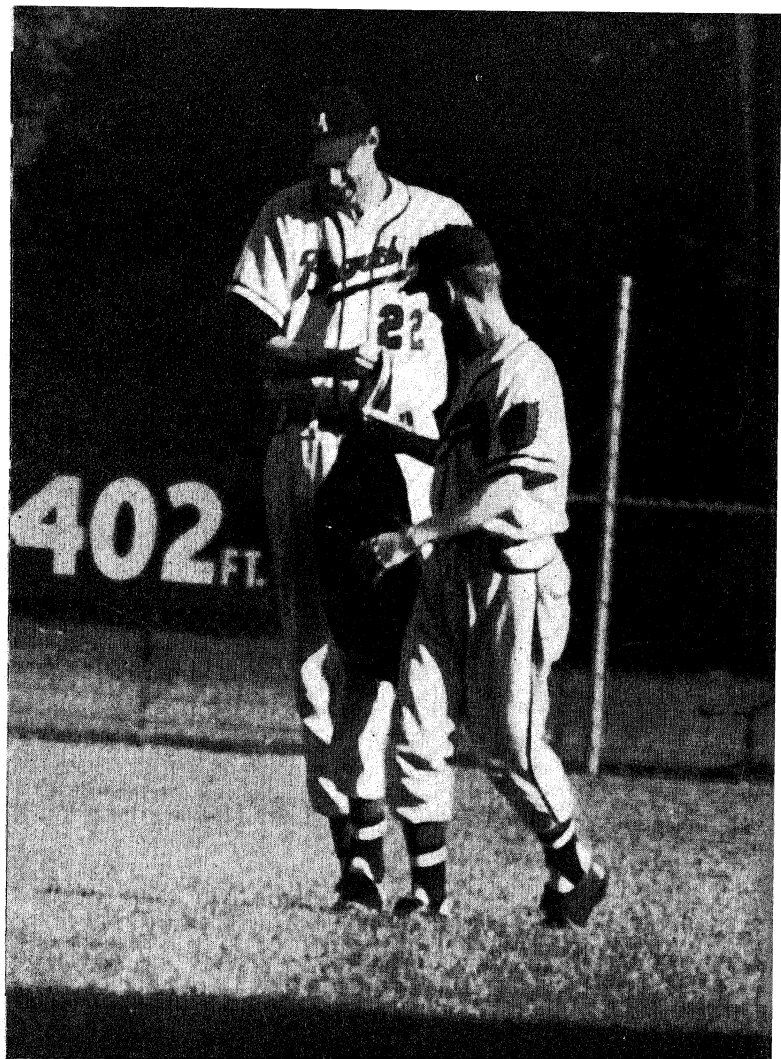
Our clubhouse handiwork wins the hearty approval of (left to right) All-stars Don Mueller, Joe Nuxhall, and Johnny Logan.



In the off-season I play guard on the Marquette High School basketball team.



My two managers – Fred Haney (*left*) and Charlie Grimm.



"I'll stop this rally in a hurry," says big Gene Conley as he hands me his jacket. He did, too, and saved a key victory over the Chicago Cubs in the September stretch drive.

Cubs is committed when a baserunner who could be forced fails to advance to the next base on what should be a game-winning hit. There were two out in the last of the ninth, the score was tied, and the winning run was on third. Freese was parked on first when the batter singled cleanly. But Gene, assuming the game was over, did not go down to second. He was tagged out and the run did not count.

Having only the bare facts about the incident, I asked Fred for the details.

"The crazy part of it," he related, "was that I wasn't even looking at Freese when it happened. I was trying to get Roman Mejias, who hit the ball, to go to first base. He had started toward the dugout for some reason. Then, just when I got him squared away, I looked over and saw Freese ambling back to first to congratulate him!"

"Did you lose the game?" I asked innocently.

"Are you kidding?" he said. "What else can you expect after a boner like that?"

Haney doesn't fine or even reprimand a player unless his lapse fully warrants it, but he did levy two fines in 1956, the first for acts on the field since the Braves moved to Milwaukee. One went to Danny O'Connell, for \$25, and the other to Bobby Thomson, for \$100.

O'Connell was penalized for not running out a routine ground ball he hit straight at the first baseman in a game with the Pirates. He turned off short of first base, assuming that first baseman Dale Long would make the putout long before he could reach the bag. But the ball rolled up

Long's arm, and as he tried to find it, it fell to the ground. The pitcher, Ron Kline, coming over to cover first, fell on the ball like a football player recovering a fumble. He reached for the bag, stretching full length, and touched it well ahead of a very embarrassed O'Connell.

Haney could detect no humor in this situation. He snapped at O'Connell, "That'll cost you \$50. You didn't even run sixty feet [the base is ninety feet from home plate]."

"Sure, I did," pleaded Danny. "I ran sixty-five feet at least."

"OK," Fred said. "I'll make it \$25—a dollar a foot."

Later, in the clubhouse, Danny was the butt of some pretty rough ribbing about his boner. He took it in his usual good spirit, however. "I just gave it the old Duke Snider turn, that's all," he said. "It was a 10,000 to 1 shot, and it had to backfire on me. I never saw it happen to the Duke."

The "Duke Snider turn" is often used by the Dodger star when he sees no chance of averting an out. He simply turns off short of first base and starts back to the dugout.

Some one remarked that it wouldn't happen again in ten years. "Not to O'Connell, anyway," Haney quipped.

Thomson was fined for taking it upon himself to try to steal home in a game at Brooklyn in the September stretch drive. He not only ran without permission, but made matters worse by not sliding. This made him an even easier out

than he would have been otherwise, and it also made Haney as angry as I've ever seen him.

"You're fined a hundred bucks," Haney said to Thomson, "and you won't get it back, either. A thing like that is inexcusable."

Fortunately the Braves won both games in which the fines were levied. If they hadn't, Fred would probably have had nightmares all winter.

Actually, though, Fred does an excellent job of smiling in the face of adversity. One time he stubbed his big toe on the bedstead at home, and the toe swelled up so much that he had to cut a hole in his shoe. He cut a comical figure on the field for the next week or so, wearing two different kinds of shoes, and the "jockeys" on the opposing bench had all sorts of fun with him. This he met with a laugh and the remark, "I don't care how funny it looks as long as we keep on winning."

The Braves did keep on winning for some time, and since Charlie Root had taken over on the coaching lines in Haney's place, he stayed there until the streak was over. Fred still "coached" to himself, though, on every close play.

As a matter of fact, seeing Fred sweat things out on the bench convinced me that coaching on the baselines is essential to prevent complete collapse of a manager's nervous system. At least he has to concentrate on one worry at a time that way. If he stays in the dugout, he has to divide his

nervous attention among several. There probably isn't a better way to get an ulcer.

My two managers were a study in contrasts. I probably could spend hours listing the ways in which they differed.

Grimm, as mentioned earlier, is an outstanding banjo player. Just in case anybody doubted it, he proved his ability to his players in a clubhouse duet with the famed Eddie Peabody, and he proved it to the public in a stirring recital at a Milwaukee baseball writers' dinner. Haney is not musically inclined, at least not as much as Grimm, yet he enjoys a Broadway musical as much as anybody does.

Grimm, as just about every baseball fan knows, is the easy-going type. Haney demands discipline and perfection, although he can hardly be called a driver of the Eddie Stanky school.

Grimm was close to the players—"one of the boys." Haney stays aloof, making it plain that he is running the show.

Grimm was always one of the last men to leave the Braves' clubhouse after a game. Haney is invariably one of the first.

My two managers were different in all these respects, and in many more as well. Yet they were alike in the only two ways that really mattered. Both were wonderful gentlemen, and both made me extra proud to be the Braves' batboy.

CHAPTER IX

The Eastern Circuit

I stuffed so many clothes into my suitcase that I had to struggle to get it shut. After all, I didn't want to be caught sartorially short on the Great White Way.

It was July 23, and the highlight of the season was here at last. I was about to make my annual eastern trip with the Braves. Ordinarily I dread the end of a home stand, but once a year it's different. This home stand had seemed as though it was never going to end.

Mom and Dad took me to the airport at an early morning hour. The Braves had an exhibition game in Toronto that night and had to get started early because of the two-hour difference in time between Toronto and Milwaukee. We said our good-byes, I vowed to write home often, and Mom and Dad left. They looked a little sad, as though they were afraid I wouldn't be able to take care of myself, but they had no reason to worry. As a two-year veteran in the big leagues, I was an old hand at this sort of thing.

As I boarded the plane, I heard some of the players grumbling about "getting up at the crack of dawn." One or two others were complaining over losing the day off that had been provided in the original schedule. Nobody heard any squawks from me, though. I don't know when I've been happier.

What made this trip even more enjoyable to contemplate was the fact that I wouldn't have to be a "loner." In other words, I wasn't the only boy of high school age making the trip. In the past, only the batboy had gone along, and I imagine there were times when he felt lost and lonesome. This time the club took everybody connected with both clubhouses—six of us altogether.

Besides me, there was Chad Blossfield, the ball boy; Dave Williams, the home clubhouse boy; Norm Flisram, visitors' batboy; Bob Sachen, visitors' clubhouse boy; and Johnny Kapps, page boy for Duffy Lewis, our traveling secretary. With a crew like that, we couldn't help but have ourselves a ball.

Another "once a year man" on the trip was Tommy Ferguson of the visitors' clubhouse. Fergy is probably the youngest clubhouse attendant in the league, but he still has quite a few years on us teen-agers. As a matter of fact, he is an eleven-year veteran, having started as batboy for the Boston Red Sox in the mid-forties.

Chad Blossfield and I were the only ones treated to the trip to Toronto. The rest of the boys took a train directly

to New York, where the Braves were to open their eastern swing the next day.

From then on, we were together—traveling with the ball players, living at the same hotels, drawing the same amount of meal money, and even observing the same curfew—midnight after afternoon games and about two hours after the end of night games. This seemed a bit silly to us at first, but the men in charge convinced us that it wouldn't look well for boys our age to be running around all night.

For meal money we received eight dollars a day. This was distributed before we left, but only after a small rhu-barb. Duffy Lewis, who handles all arrangements pertaining to transportation and hotel accommodations, didn't want to give us our money because of something that had happened the year before.

Chad Blossfield had caused all the trouble by using a "clever" piece of strategy when he went east with the club in 1955. He was so sure he wouldn't need all of his meal money that he left some of it at home. Then, about ten days later, he had to wire home for more.

When Duffy heard about this, he made up his mind not to give us our money until we were safely on our way. It took some persuasive talk to change his mind, but he finally gave in and we headed east with \$112 apiece. Incidentally, Bloss took the entire sum with him this time.

We changed planes at Chicago and arrived in Toronto

late in the afternoon. Before going to the ball park, the players were introduced to guests of Louis Perini, the Braves' owner and president, at a reception in the hotel. The unusual feature of this was that they attended the party in their uniforms.

Here was something that you had to see to believe—staid business men and their ladies, many of them in formal dress, rubbing elbows at a social function with baseball players decked out in full battle regalia. It isn't a common practice anywhere, least of all in conservative Toronto.

This was not a publicity stunt. The players changed into their uniforms at the hotel instead of the ball park because the clubhouse facilities were inadequate. Minor league clubs usually carry only about twenty players and can barely take care of that many. For that reason, the larger major league squads use the minor league clubhouses only as pre-game headquarters. They "suit-up" in hotel rooms and return there immediately after games.

While the party lasted until shortly before game time, our stay there was brief. Mr. Perini merely introduced the players and then excused them. This was much appreciated in view of the fact that the players' unconventional party attire had caused them a certain amount of embarrassment.

We went directly from the party to the bus that was to take us to the Toronto ball park. I used to think our buses in Milwaukee were slow, but compared to that wagon they

move like race cars. On the way to the park, we rode along a waterfront and saw a man rowing a kayak. Believe it or not, he was going as fast as we were.

After the game, Bloss and I walked downtown. We were amazed at the lack of bright lights. Toronto just didn't look at all like American cities its size. But it did have the usual quota of movie houses, and we wandered into one of them.

Early the next morning we took off for New York. This, of course, was the high spot of the whole trip. The name "New York" has a magic ring for almost anybody, so you can imagine what it meant to a bunch of wide-eyed high school boys. The best part of the whole deal was that we would hit New York twice—first to play the New York Giants and later to play the Brooklyn Dodgers. Roughly half of the trip was to be spent in the world's largest and most exciting city.

Nobody has been initiated into New York life until he has been lost in the subway, and it took us no time at all to fulfill this requirement. On the second day there, I was in a group which boarded the wrong subway train to go to the Polo Grounds.

We had been instructed by veteran subway riders to get off at 155th street. This was fine up to a certain point. After we stopped at 125th, we were sure that the next stop was ours. But along came 155th street and the train didn't stop. It kept right on going until it reached 170th.

None of our more experienced colleagues had told us

what to do in a case like this; so I asked a man who looked like a subway patron from way back. He knew his stuff, too. He told me to get off in a hurry (if you don't, the door may slam right in your face), go to the other side of the tracks, and take a local to 155th.

We followed his directions and arrived at the Polo Grounds only half an hour late. The players already were engrossed in pepper games by the time I reached the playing field, but since my duties on the road were confined to taking care of the bats, no harm was done.

If you wanted to be technical, you could say that I worked on this trip while the other kids took a vacation. This would be true in that I served as batboy and the others enjoyed the games from box seats behind the Braves' dugout.

Actually, though, I didn't work either. At least I didn't work enough to remove the trip from the vacation class. I was subjected to none of the pregame or postgame drudgery that I was used to performing at home—no shoe shining, no floor mopping, no laundry work, no nothing except handling the bats. All such details were reserved for the visiting clubhouse attendants and his assistants. It was so easy for me that I almost felt like a spectator.

Only once on the entire eastern swing did I have to exert myself. The strap on Del Crandall's catching mask broke in the middle of a game at the Polo Grounds. Ordinarily this would be no problem, but in that park the clubhouses are beyond the center-field bleachers—more than a

block away. In order not to hold up the game, I had to run, not trot, the 600 feet each way. I was so winded when I got to the clubhouse that I had to take a short breather before I started back with the new mask.

Otherwise, I concentrated during my two golden weeks on enjoying the sights and attractions of New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. The way it worked out, I had most of my fun in New York and got most of my sleep in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

It's much the same way with everybody who makes the tour—players, sports writers, broadcasters, etc. As one anonymous player put it, "It's always great to get to New York, but it's always nice to leave, too—so I can rest up in Philly or Pittsburgh."

When we reached New York, we found ourselves with the intriguing prospect of spending seven evenings there, three during the Giant series and four during the Dodger series. The club stayed at the Commodore Hotel, in midtown Manhattan, for both series. With that much time ahead of us, we decided to break in slowly. We made no special plans for the first night—just walked over to Broadway and looked around.

This may not sound like much of an evening to an adult, but to a bunch of teen-agers from Milwaukee it carried no end of interest. To us, Broadway was like a carnival midway, with pinball machines, shooting gallerys, and the like wherever he went. And while there were no side shows advertised, we saw plenty of them just in walking down the

street. They say you've never really seen "characters" until you've walked down Broadway, and after this experience I heartily agree.

After that first night we confined our sightseeing to the daytime. We hit the usual spots for tourists—the Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, the RCA Building, and Greenwich Village. During the evenings when there were no games, we concentrated on entertainment. We went to two Broadway plays, *Pajama Game* and *Mr. Wonderful*, and saw two big television programs, the Ed Sullivan show and the "\$64,000 Challenge."

For all of this entertainment, which incidentally was free, we were indebted to Duffy Lewis. Every day, it seemed, Duffy asked us, "Well, boys, what do you want to do tonight?" If we offered no suggestions, he made one of his own and fixed us up. It must be great to have the connections he has. Certainly it proves the truth of the phrase: "It isn't what you know, but whom you know."

Besides all those free tickets, Duffy took us out to dinner twice and bought our breakfast several times. Once, in Pittsburgh where hotel meal prices are a bit high, one of us had a five-dollar tab for breakfast. It's unbelievable, but true, and it explains why the club gives the players eight dollars a day instead of allowing them to sign meal checks.

Until two or three years ago, the players got meal money only in New York. They signed checks elsewhere around the league. Then the club moved its Pittsburgh stopping place from the Schenley Hotel to the luxurious

Carlton House, site of the five-dollar breakfast mentioned earlier, and it wasn't long before meal bills started getting out of hand.

It was not uncommon for a player to eat fifteen dollars' worth of food in a day—or at least eat food that cost that much. Joey Jay, whose ability to sleep is equalled only by his ability to put away large quantities of food, is reported to have exceeded that figure on more than one occasion.

As a result of this, and excesses on only a slightly smaller scale at the Warwick Hotel in Philadelphia, the club changed its policy and began issuing meal money throughout the league.

The new setup had a distinct effect on the eating habits of the players. Instead of dining in the plush surroundings of hotels, they sought out restaurants with an eye toward economy. The most for the least became their goal, and it didn't take them long to reach it.

Rarely do you find a Brave nowadays in the Warwick or Carlton House dining rooms. On eight dollars a day, only Warren Spahn and perhaps a few others can afford the prices.

In spite of these financial difficulties, players often "popped" for our meals. One time, for example, three of us were eating a postgame snack at the Cartoon Club in New York when Del Crandall came in. Del picked up all three tabs and said, "I'd better do it now instead of waiting 'til you have steaks."

We thanked him and, as soon as we had finished our

meals, started to walk out. The cashier, unaware of what had been going on, collared us as we went past and asked gruffly, "Where are your checks, boys?"

Crandall, just beginning to eat in the back of the room, had to give his OK before the cashier set us free.

For a batboy, an eight-dollar allowance is plenty. I could almost call it more than enough, inasmuch as I saved an average of two or three dollars a day, but I really shouldn't mention the fact. When the club management finds out, they are liable to cut me to five or six dollars a day.

As it was, though, I did very well financially. I did so well, in fact, that I began to fancy myself a budding business man. I bought a sport jacket, shoes, shirts, and several lesser items—all on the surplus from my meal money. At that point my spending spree ended. I ran out of room in my suitcase.

I would hate to offend my friends in Philadelphia, but in all honesty I must report that their town was the dull-est on the eastern circuit. There was little to see or do there; so the smart thing was to get caught up on my sleep.

Nevertheless, two features of the Philadelphia visit stand out in my mind. One was the rainout we had on a Saturday night. Our dugout got so full of water that it would have taken water wings to navigate it. Fortunately, the downpour set in before we put the bats and other equipment in the dugout. If it had come afterward, every-

thing would have been ruined. Not only that, but somebody might have drowned.

The other memorable thing was far more pleasant. I was the subject of an article in the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, written by the visiting batboy in Philadelphia, John Brogan. Here are the headlines and excerpts from the story:

BATBOYS GO BIG LEAGUE
Braves Host to 6 Youngsters
On Current Tour of the East

BY JOHN BROGAN
(Batboy, Visiting
National League Clubs)

I temporarily lost my job over the weekend to a tall lad from Milwaukee named Paul Wick.

Wick is the Braves' batboy in Milwaukee. He is currently enjoying a 14-day road trip, along with five other boys, as guests of the Braves' management.

The boys are living just like the big leaguers. They reside at the same hotels (two to a room), ride the same trains, get \$8 a day meal money, and even have a curfew.

The boys must be in their rooms by midnight. Joe Taylor, Braves clubhouse man, keeps a close check on this.

Pitcher Ernie Johnson took up a collection among the players to provide the boys with some spending money. It's a good bet that they won't have much left

at the end of the trip, since they are picking up a lot of souvenirs to take to the folks back home.

Wick has been the Braves' batboy for the last two years. He got his job through the help of pitcher Warren Spahn. Spahn rented a house from Paul's father the first year the Braves were in Milwaukee. The next year, Paul became a "member" of the Braves.

General Manager John Quinn started the practice of taking the batboys on a road trip each year when the team was still in Boston. It is estimated that the trip for the boys costs the Braves close to \$3,000.

I'm proud of that story and keep a clipping of it in a scrapbook at home. No matter how much publicity a person gets at home (not that I get much), he always seems to get a bigger kick out of something in an out-of-town paper. Besides, I got particular pleasure out of being written up by a fellow batboy.

Something that was mentioned in John Brogan's story, and something that I neglected to mention, was the financial help given us by the players. Johnson, as player representative, collected quite a bit from the other players—I don't remember exactly how much. Whatever the amount, it was much appreciated and was responsible for many of the trinkets that we took home to our families.

After three days in Philadelphia, we returned to New York for the Brooklyn series. This time our evening activities were curbed by three straight night games, but we overcame this obstacle by planning big things in the daytime. One afternoon we went to Aqueduct race track, an-

other to Coney Island, and on the third we took a sightseeing tour.

I got off to a sensational start at the races, picking the first three winners with the skill (and luck) of an old-time horse player. Then I found my level. I didn't cash in another ticket the rest of the afternoon. Perhaps it was just as well. It squelched any notion I might have had of becoming a regular horse player.

At Coney Island we went on a few rides, took in several side shows, were "taken" by a photographer who charged us seventy-five cents a picture, thought seriously of complaining to the management, and did a lot of just plain walking. One thing we avoided very carefully was the roller coaster. Unlike most boys our age, none of us considered our stomachs strong enough to stand up under the punishment dealt out on that torture device.

Since we had to abide by the players' curfew restrictions, we played cards at night to while away the hours between midnight and bedtime. To ward off monotony, we changed games frequently—from seven-up (more popularly known as fantan) to poker to tish to gin rummy. Tish, in case the reader's memory is hazy, is the game introduced by Warren Spahn in my pre-batboy days.

If somebody happened to get hungry during the card game, it was a simple matter to call Room Service for refreshments. If six high school kids ever felt like kings, we did.

While we were understandably reluctant to leave the

Great White Way, we were anxious to get to the Carlton House in Pittsburgh, billed by all concerned as the best hotel on the circuit. We weren't a bit disappointed, either.

Every room at the Carlton was actually an apartment, with every conceivable necessity of everyday living. The following letter, written by me to the folks at home, should provide a fair idea of what the place is like:

*Carlton House
Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Dear Kiddies:

I'm now writing while sitting in my luxurious room with the television going and the air conditioner blasting. I'll tell you a few of its conveniences: electric stove, refrigerator, sink and garbage disposal, television and radio combination, and almost enough room to play a hockey game. This is in Pittsburgh, where we're staying for two days. In New York, where we stayed for seven days, we had two beds and a radio. That's the way it goes.

I hope you got the recording I sent you when we got to New York. I haven't written since then because we have been out most of the time.

One thing that isn't hard to do is spend money. It goes pretty fast, especially in New York. We've been doing a lot of walking. I'll bet we've averaged 10 miles a day. Every third store on Times Square is a pinball machine and shooting gallery, so we spend quite a little time there.

Well, got to hit the sack now. Church tomorrow, you know.

Love,

Paul

Our rooms at the Carlton House were so fabulous that we rarely left them except to go to ball games. Pittsburgh had few side attractions anyway, so we derived most of our entertainment from television and card games.

My roommate, incidentally, was John Kapps. Chad Blossfield roomed with Norm Flisram, and Dave Williams with Bob Sachen.

Manager Fred Haney and Traveling Secretary Duffy Lewis lived in suites, and I wish I had seen their quarters in the Carlton House. They probably were built-in mansions. The coaches—Charlie Root, John Riddle, and Bob Keely—had single rooms. So did Doc Lacks, the trainer, and Joe Taylor, equipment manager and assistant trainer.

Ball clubs get cheaper hotel rates than the average transient, which of course is understandable in view of the volume of business they bring in. This concession is especially helpful, I understand, at the ordinarily expensive Carlton House.

A player's life on the road is not nearly as varied as that of the "lucky six," but I imagine we would slow down if we were to make every road trip. Movies are a player's principal diversion, and many is the time a Brave has seen three features in one day. Burdette, in fact, once went so far as to take in one double-feature in the afternoon and another at night.

With movie goers like this on the club, we never had any problems in choosing a picture to see. All we had to do

was consult an authority like Burdette, Pafko, or Keely to find out whether a show was worth seeing.

Sunday in Pittsburgh was the final day of the trip, and what a wet one it was! An electrical storm hit town during the second game of the double header, and it still was raging when we left for home that night. The next day, safely back in Milwaukee, we read that severe floods had struck the Pittsburgh area.

News of the flood was hardly surprising after what we had seen Sunday. The rain and wind got so bad that the American flag in center field was ripped to shreds and the flag pole was listing at a 45-degree angle. Visibility was next to zero, and a chill went down my spine every time I thought about the plane ride we had to take in a few hours.

My immediate problem, though, was to transport the bats (not to mention myself) from the third base dugout to the clubhouse behind first base. I was stranded, all alone except for two policemen, and the rain showed no signs whatever of letting up.

While I sat there, wondering how I was going to get across the flooded field, three kids came into the dugout and asked for broken bats. That almost floored me. Here it was raining pitchforks, and they walked through the mess without raincoats in search of souvenirs! It shows you how "daffy" some baseball fans are.

Finally I decided there was no alternative but to make a

dash for it. The policemen helped load the bats and catchers' equipment into a wheelbarrow and we started out against the storm. They held the equipment in place and I wheeled it through the rain and mud to the other dug-out. I'll bet my traveling grays were soaked for days after that.

Next was the flight to Milwaukee, and I hope I never have to go through another one like it. Duffy Lewis made arrangements for us to take a train in case the weather was too bad for flying, but an airline representative told him we had nothing to worry about. The storm had slackened only slightly and there were black clouds everywhere we looked, yet for some reason we took off.

As we nervously boarded the plane, Duffy said, "The airline man says we'll be out of this (storm) as soon as we get away from Pittsburgh."

But I wasn't convinced. I had heard reports like that before. I asked the pilot, and he was either less optimistic or more realistic. "There's quite a bit of thunderstorm activity," he said, "but we'll try to go between the storms."

With that lack of reassurance, I fastened my seat belt and prepared for the ordeal to come. It came, too, in the form of what seemed to be one continuous flash of lightning. Wherever we looked, for the next hour and a half, we could see nothing but blinding electricity.

Somebody said it was impossible for lightning to strike a plane, but that made us feel only slightly better. To put it

plainly, we were scared—plenty scared—all of us! I managed to pass the time by playing cards, but the majority of the boys just sat there and sweated it out.

The trip to Milwaukee normally takes two hours, so when the captain made an announcement, we figured we were getting set to land at Milwaukee. But we weren't anywhere near Milwaukee; we were scarcely any closer, in fact, than when we had left Pittsburgh. The captain said: "We are now passing over Dayton, Ohio, and will continue on to Milwaukee by way of Indianapolis and Chicago. We will arrive in approximately one hour and thirty minutes."

You could hear the groans all over the plane. After two hours of flying, we still had an hour and a half to go. Immediately came the question: "Do you think we've got enough fuel?" And immediately came the reassuring words: "Of course we have. They can fly this thing across the country if they have to."

For a time it looked as though they might have to do exactly that. But finally the weather cleared and we reached Milwaukee on schedule—the revised schedule, that is.

It was a harrowing finish to two wonderful weeks—the most exciting event of the trip, but the one I would like most to forget.

CHAPTER X

Man of Many Motions

Lew Burdette was having one of his typical days on the pitching mound. His only serious trouble was the matter of convincing certain parties that he wasn't throwing spit balls.

Finally the umpire called for the baseball. Lew obliged—after wiping off the ball on his uniform. The umpire found nothing unusual about the ball and promptly returned it. Lew's next pitch broke about a foot, and the batter swung helplessly for strike three.

That retired the side, and as Lew walked to the dugout, he received a familiar greeting: "Nice spitter, Lew," said one teammate. "What a load you gave that guy!" quipped another.

Burdette just chuckled and went to the water fountain for a cooling drink. He was used to such wisecracks and gave them little thought. As it turned out, though, that was only the beginning.

By the end of the season, old timers were calling Lew the most controversial pitcher since Dave Danforth. I never heard of Dave Danforth, but Burdette has certainly been involved in quite a few controversies. I can testify to that first-hand.

A lot of people around the National League seem to think that Lew doctors up the baseball in some illegal manner. Most of the rival managers have accused him of throwing the spit ball, a pitch that has been outlawed since 1931.

I haven't the slightest idea whether or not Burdette uses a spitter or any other illegal pitch. That's strictly Lew's business, and he just shrugs off the charges with a knowing grin. If he does doctor up the ball, nobody has been able to catch him at it, and even if he doesn't, the fact that rivals are suspicious of him is worth a great deal in nuisance value.

I understand that Danforth, who pitched before I was born, denies to this day that he did anything illegal. The chances are that Burdette will take the same stand when his playing days are over. Right now, though, he has everybody guessing, and that includes even his own teammates.

Burdette is a natural target for suspicion because he goes through so many motions on the mound. I don't think I've ever seen a more fidgety pitcher.

Just watching Lew work is enough to make a person jumpy. Before delivering a pitch, he rubs the back of his

neck with his hand, tugs at the bill of his cap, takes off his glove and rubs the ball, rubs his forehead with his fingers, rubs his fingers on his uniform, picks up the resin bag, licks his fingers, smooths out the dirt in front of the mound, turns around and looks at the outfield, and rubs the ball in his glove as though he were squeezing an orange.

Actually, it's no wonder that Lew is suspected of fooling around with the baseball. The opposition figures that he must do something to it or he wouldn't go through all those antics before pitching.

Hardly a game passes, when Burdette is pitching, that some member of the opposing team doesn't hold up play and ask the umpire to look at the baseball. Invariably the inspection reveals absolutely nothing. Sometimes Lew teases his accuser along by wiping the ball on his uniform before throwing it to the umpire. This makes the enemy more determined than ever to catch him, but nobody ever does.

Bobby Bragan, the Pittsburgh manager, got so riled up about it one night that he got himself tossed out of the game. He told one player after another to ask the umpire for the baseball Burdette was using. It happened to be raining off and on that night, and Umpire Frank Dascoli decided that Bragan was trying to stall the game. The Braves were ahead at the time, 1-0.

Dascoli finally called Bragan over to him and said in a fatherly voice, "Listen, Bobby, I've called for the ball ten

times and haven't found a thing on it. This club (the Braves) is fighting for the pennant and you're trying to delay the game. Any more of it and you're through."

Bragan didn't give the warning a second thought. He kept right on heckling Dascoli about Burdette's alleged spitter, and he kept right on telling his hitters to ask for the ball. Dascoli eventually could stand it no longer, and with moral support from fellow umpire Larry Goetz, he gave Bragan the thumb.

Bragan left the field, after firing a few parting words at the two umpires, but he didn't calm down for some time. After the game, which the Braves won despite his tactics, he was griping about Burdette's pitching. "He throws a spitter, all right," Bragan said, "and I'll tell you how he does it, too. He fidgets around on the mound, fixing his cap, tugging at his belt, and picking dirt out of his toe plate. Then he adjusts his cap, and as his hand goes past his mouth he spits into it. Preacher Roe practiced one whole winter and got so he could do it without moving his lips. Burdette's pretty cute at it, too.

"When Burdette picks up the resin bag, he's careful to hold it in his fingers because he still has a drop of saliva in his palm. If the batter complains and the umpire calls for the ball, it's still dry. Burdette doesn't apply the spit until he goes into his windup. By that time it's too late to catch him."

Preacher Roe, the former pitcher mentioned by Bragan, "came clean" after he retired a couple of years ago. He re-

vealed in a magazine article that he had been using the spit ball for several years and that he had been successful largely because of it.

Roe isn't the only guy who has used a spitter illegally, of course. Even a teen-aged greenhorn like me realizes that. As a matter of fact, Burdette isn't the only one accused of using it today. There are fifteen or twenty pitchers in the majors who are open to suspicion, including a World Series hero named Sal Maglie.

Speaking of Maglie, a funny thing happened in Brooklyn one night when he and Burdette were the opposing pitchers. This occurred on my one road trip; so I can relay the story first-hand.

We lost the game, 2-1, and in the clubhouse afterward, I heard numerous complaints about Maglie's pitching. One Brave said, "They talk about Burdette using a spitter. How about that old so and so?" Another snapped, "Yeah, that's right. To hear them tell it, Burdette's got a spitter but Maglie's just got a good curve."

There were a few other comments, too, all based on the same theme. The boys couldn't understand why nobody ever questioned Maglie's pitching. To them, he was as guilty as sin.

In the Dodger clubhouse, meanwhile, the opposition was commenting on Burdette. Jackie Robinson was the most outspoken, but he had plenty of company. All of them were convinced that Lew threw spit balls.

The funny part of the whole thing was that every New

York newspaper carried stories the next day about the Dodgers' charges against Burdette. Only once did I see Maglie's name mentioned in connection with the spit ball matter, and that was done only in passing. The writers made Maglie the hero of the Dodgers' 2-1 victory, and Burdette the villain who got a beating he richly deserved.

Robinson was quoted as saying, "Burdette's got the best spitter I ever saw. They call it a sinker, but I never saw a sinker act like that. Why, he struck me out once on a pitch that must have broken a foot. I bet I missed it by a good eight inches.

"He never seems to wipe off the palm of his hand before he throws that good spitter—or should I saw sinker? The umpires keep saying they can't call what they can't see, but something ought to be done about it."

When Burdette read that, he really fumed. "That's ridiculous," he said. "Who ever heard of throwing a spitter with the palm of your hand?"

Elsewhere in the story, Manager Walt Alston of the Dodgers was quoted as follows: "I have instructed my players to step out of the batter's box any time they see Burdette loading up. Even if they don't call for the ball, they delay the game a few seconds that way and give the ball a chance to dry off." He also said it was too bad that the umpires were unable to catch Burdette "with the goods."

Even Peeewe Reese—Dodger captain and usually the quiet, unassuming type—got into the act. He said, accord-

ing to the story, "I'd like to see how Burdette throws that sinker of his."

Lew didn't like this crack any better than the accusations by Robinson and Alston. His comment was brief and to the point: "You can tell Peewee that if he wants to find out, I'll hold a special class and teach him."

It is much the same way elsewhere in the league, except that elsewhere there are no Maglies. Probably Burdette's most persistent tormentor is Birdie Tebbetts, manager of the Cincinnati Redlegs. Tebbetts has been in Burdette's hair on countless occasions, and he made his loudest blast just a few weeks after the incident in Brooklyn.

On that particular night, after Burdette had beaten the Redlegs 3-1, Tebbetts accused Lew of violating almost every pitching rule in the book. "I'm not accusing Burdette of throwing a spitter," Tebbetts said. "I'm sure he is too high-minded to do anything like that. But I do say that he violates every pitching rule in the book. He spits on the ball, he spits on his glove, he spits on his hand, he rubs resin on his glove, and he rubs the ball on his uniform. Every one of these things is in direct violation of Rule 8.02, yet the umpires let him get away with it."

Not knowing the rules by heart, I looked up Rule 8.02 after hearing about Tebbetts' charges. The rule reads, in part: "The pitcher shall not be allowed to (1) apply a foreign substance to the ball; (2) expectorate either on the ball or his glove; (3) rub the ball on his glove, person

or clothing; (4) deface the ball in any manner; (5) deliver what is called the 'shine' ball, 'spit' ball, 'mud' ball or 'emery' ball. The pitcher, of course, is allowed to rub the ball between his bare hands.

"For violation of any part of this rule, the umpire shall at once order the pitcher from the game, and in addition he (the pitcher) shall be automatically suspended for a period of ten days, on notice from the president of the league."

The rule actually told me little that I didn't know before, outside of listing the penalty for violation, and it also told me little about Burdette's guilt or innocence. I have noticed that when Lew pitches, he puts resin on his fingers and then puts his fingers in his mouth. It almost makes me sick to look at him when he does this, but I don't know that such an act is illegal.

Anyway, Tebbetts continued his speech by saying, "The umpires claim that as long as he goes to the resin bag after doing all these things, he is absolved of his sins. Why, they're calling that resin bag his father confessor. I'll tell you one thing—if he doesn't throw a spitter, he's missing a wonderful opportunity."

In the war of nerves that night, Tebbetts got the umpire to order Lew to remove his cap. I don't know what Birdie expected to find there, but Lew just laughed it off. "I'd have taken off my pants if Birdie had wanted me to," he said. "I just think he was trying to get my goat. He majored in psychology, you know."

Bill Rigney, the New York Giants' manager, was quoted recently as saying that Burdette's late season slump was due to "worrying about being caught with the spitter. Actually he's got nothing to worry about," Rigney remarked. "If he does throw a spitter, he isn't the only one, and who ever gets called for it?"

Burdette agreed with Rigney on this last point but not on the one about worrying. "Why should I worry?" he reasoned. "The hitters are the ones who do the worryin'. They and managers like Tebbetts and Bragan."

Fred Hutchinson, the St. Louis manager, would like to have the spit ball legalized again. He also is one of the many who think that Burdette uses it. "Sometimes you can see the ball drip," I heard him tell a reporter one day. "That's how well he loads up. But let him throw the spitter if he wants to. The batter has all the advantage now, and it's about time the pitcher got a break."

As you might have guessed, Hutchinson was a pitcher in his active days. He was a good one, too, with the Detroit Tigers. And there are other baseball men who agree with him.

I sat down with Burdette one day before a game and asked him about this "spit ball" stuff. I know him as well as anybody on the team outside of Warren Spahn, so I figured he wouldn't mind being questioned.

"Why should I mind?" he said. "I've got nothing to hide. Listen, they talk as if anybody who decided to throw a spitter could just crank up and throw it. That's a lotta

hooley. It takes practice, and plenty of it, to control a pitch like that. You would have to use it a lot to get confidence in it, and nobody ever accuses anybody of using it regularly—not even me. They figure a guy uses it just in a pinch, usually with two out, so the umpire can't get a look at the ball afterward.

"I once asked Burleigh Grimes to show me how he threw the spitter. You've heard of him, haven't you?"

I nodded.

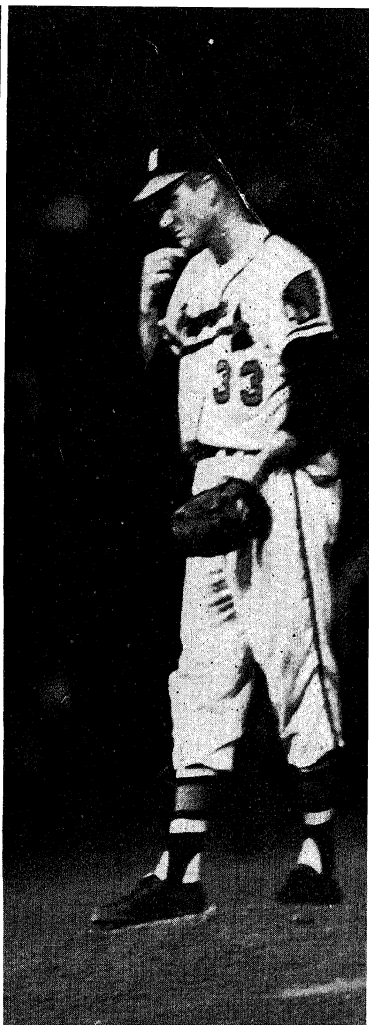
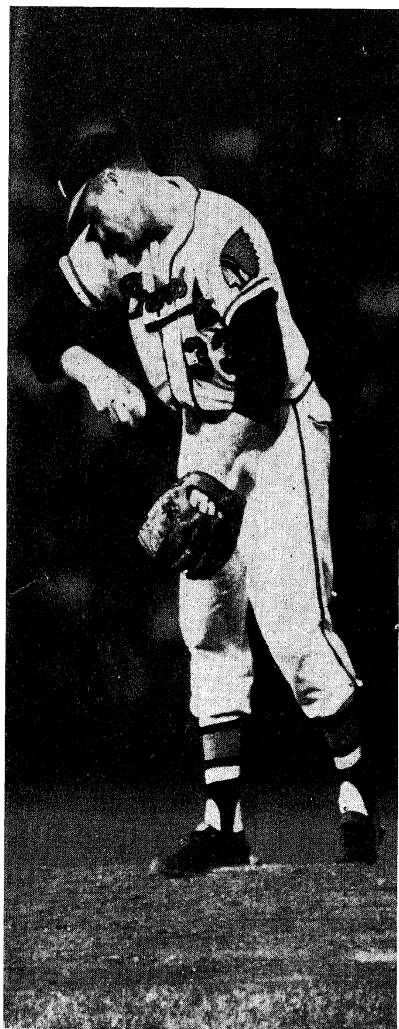
"He was the last legal spit ball pitcher. And do you know what he told me? He said, 'Don't throw a spitter. Just make them think you do and you'll be more effective without it.' "

That made good sense, I agreed. But I still wanted to know why Lew went through so many fidgety motions on the mound.

"I don't know exactly why," he replied, "because I'm not really nervous. It works out fine, though, because it makes the hitter nervous. Maybe he isn't looking for the pitch he gets. Somebody's liable to yell 'spitter' anytime I throw breaking stuff. The hitter expects a spitter and he gets fooled.

"I try to mix up my pitches, depending on what kind of team we're playing. Against right-handed clubs like the Dodgers, I throw a lot of sidearm curves. Otherwise I throw mostly curves and sliders and the rest screwballs, sinkers, fast balls, and change-ups."

From that list, one draws the correct conclusion that Burdette, with or without spitter, has one of the largest



These are just two of Lew Burdette's many motions on the mound. He probably is the most fidgety pitcher in baseball — and also one of the most successful.



A picture of dejection, the Braves' batboy puts away his bats for the last time until April.

collections of pitches in baseball. Lew can throw just about any type of pitch and throw it well, and his record shows how much he has improved as he has gone along. In 1956 he won nineteen games, more than he ever had before—even in the minors. Not only that, but he led the National League with a 2.71 earned run average.

Burdette is more than an outstanding pitcher and a frequent center of controversy. As I have already said, he is the Braves' most accomplished wisecracker and practical joker. He seems to be at his best on the buses that carry the players from place to place within each city. If he isn't telling jokes or mimicking somebody, he is stopping traffic with his "policeman's" whistle.

Lew's whistle, done through his teeth, is so shrill that it sounds just like the one blown by an officer on the beat. Once when the Braves were riding along the outer drive in Chicago, on their way from the airport to the Edgewater Beach Hotel, Lew leaned out the window of the bus and gave out with one of his best whistles. A driver next to the bus immediately pulled over to the curb. I don't know how long he waited for a policeman to come along and write out a ticket!

But the Lew Burdette who blows police whistles, sets fire to newspapers, and ties friends' shoes together is a far different Lew Burdette from the one that does business on the mound. You might say that Lew is a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Only once have I known Lew to display any levity while

pitching. That was in spring training of 1956, in a game with the St. Louis Cardinals. Lew struck out Joe Cunningham to end an inning, and his pitching opponent, Vinegar Bend Mizell, suspected him of doing it with a spitter. When Vinegar Bend reached the mound and picked up the ball, he held it up with his fingertips as though it were still dripping. Then he went through exaggerated motions of wiping it off.

Burdette watched this bit of pantomime from the dug-out. Then he laughed. "That guy's quite a card, isn't he now?" he said. It was the only time any of us ever saw him get a chuckle out of anything while a game was going on.

In keeping with his dual personality, Burdette can be either the fastest or slowest worker in the business. When things are going right, he may breeze through a game in less than two hours. Such a thing is almost unheard of nowadays. But when they aren't, look out. You're liable to be there all night.

Once, when Lew ran into some trouble and took his own sweet time about pitching, Johnny Logan came in at the end of an inning and said, "A guy gets mighty tired out there waiting for an inning to end. He must take five minutes between pitches."

The best part of that from Burdette's standpoint, and of course from Logan's also, is that the hitter likewise gets tired of waiting. It is just another piece of Burdette strategy—if you have trouble getting batters out any other way, you try to wear them down by staring at them. He

often does, too, or at least he holds them off until he finds a pitch that will work.

In addition to possessing all of the attributes already mentioned, Lew is the only member of the club who drives a jeep; he is usually the last man to arrive at the park for a game; he is public relations man for Sunshine Gardens in his home town of Sarasota, Fla.; and he is the Braves' Mr. Fixit.

This last designation requires some explanation. Lew can fix anything from baseball gloves to zippers. If the stitching breaks on a teammate's glove, he does a beautiful job of putting it back together. If a zipper breaks, he can fix that, too. He did it once for Bob Allen, the Braves' demon statistician and assistant to Public Relations Director Donald Davidson.

It's too bad that Lew can't fix lawn mowers as well. Just before spring training began in 1956, he had to take his lawn mower to a repair shop in Sarasota. While he was standing around waiting for service, a blade flew off a machine and cut his hand. There was some doubt that he would be able to begin training on time, but he made it.

The jeep, incidentally, is not the Burdettes' family automobile. Lew just uses it in Florida, around his house and in driving to and from the ball park for spring training. He thus not only saves the wear and tear on his Buick but also provides transportation for Mrs. Burdette and the two little Burdettes.

An odd coincidence developed in 1956. Burdette suddenly became our ace rainy day pitcher. He shut out Cincinnati and Pittsburgh on rainy days and beat Brooklyn and Pittsburgh on rainy nights. Besides that, he shut out Chicago in both rain and snow on opening day. It was so cold that day that he had to use a hand warmer in the dugout between innings.

Naturally, a few remarks were passed about Burdette's effectiveness in foul weather. Lew passed them off with the crack, "Sure, I'm better in the rain. I don't have to work half as hard to get the ball wet."

As I said, I can't state for sure whether or not Burdette throws a spit ball. I can say, though, that it helps plenty to keep the hitters guessing as he does. His best pitch actually is the one he doesn't throw.

"You might call it my psychological ace in the hole," Lew said one day. "As long as they keep thinking I throw a spitter, I've got them under control. I just hope they keep right on accusing me."

CHAPTER XI

Down the Stretch

This looked like one of those lucky years. They say a team can't win a pennant without luck, and we were getting plenty of it.

Even I was lucky. I had an emergency appendectomy late in April and figured to miss an entire home stand. You never know what might happen when you're away from your job that long. But the good old weather man came to my rescue. He served up so much rain that the Braves couldn't play for a whole week. Believe it or not, I missed just five games out of thirteen.

Pretty soon the club started to get the breaks, too. Anybody who saw the Braves win eleven straight games in June, after Fred Haney replaced Charlie Grimm as manager, will tell you that they didn't look particularly good doing it.

Don't get me wrong, now. I'm not saying that the winning streak was a matter of pure luck. It's just that every

conceivable break went our way in those eleven games. We couldn't do anything wrong and the opposition couldn't do anything right. Our bunts stayed fair; theirs rolled foul. Our pinch hitters laid down squeeze bunts or hit home runs; theirs struck out or hit into double plays. Our relief pitchers stopped rallies; theirs kept them going. In short, we made the big play and they didn't.

I'm sure that the players, without belittling their own achievement, felt the same way about the streak. I talked to Del Crandall about it.

"It was really a funny winning streak," he said. "By that I mean it was unusual. Ordinarily, when a team wins that many games in a row, the players start pressing and you can feel the tension. Some of them even get a little irritable because they're so 'on edge' about keeping the streak going. It wasn't that way with us at all. We stayed loose all the time and talked and joked about how many we had won in a row. It was just as though we knew we'd win somehow no matter what we did."

We did always win, too, until Robin Roberts finally ended the streak at Philadelphia one night. By that time we had jumped from fifth place into the National League lead, and the fans in Milwaukee were starting to whoop it up for the pennant. Why not? The way things were going, it didn't look as though anything could stop the Braves this time.

Two weeks later, the world champion Brooklyn Dodgers came to Milwaukee and we licked them four times in a

row. The newspapers carried stories after that about the end of the Dodger dynasty. The Bums were too old, the stories said, and like the One Hoss Shay in the famous poem, their team was falling apart all at once.

After witnessing those four wonderful victories, I believed what I read. The Dodgers could have won any one of the four games, but they always managed to do the wrong thing at the right time for the Braves. We took advantage of their mistakes and they couldn't take advantage of ours. They certainly looked as though they were ready to fold.

If the Dodgers were in a state of collapse, we were as good as "in." Nobody took the Cincinnati Redlegs seriously, despite the fact that they were still only a game or two behind us; so that made us Braves the team to beat. The experts were starting to say we couldn't miss.

At no time, though, did the Braves themselves become overconfident. They never figured for a minute that the Dodgers were dead.

I remember what Joe Adcock told me after the four-game sweep over the Dodgers. I said something like, "Well, it looks like the Bums are through, doesn't it?"

"Through?" he answered. "Are you kiddin'? We've got half a season to go and they're only five and a half games behind us. Heck, no, they're not through. They're still the team we've got to beat to win this pennant."

We know now that Joe was right. The Dodgers were not through. But it was a pleasant thing for Milwaukee fans to

think about and everybody was getting pretty excited. Wherever I went around town I heard pennant and World Series talk. The dream really was beginning to build up.

A few days after the Dodgers left town, we finally got a bad break. We lost Adcock in the second inning of a game with the Giants, and his absence probably cost us the game. Big Joe was in one of his hot streaks at the time, having ruined the Dodgers almost single-handed, and the chances are that he would have hit at least one long one before the night was over. As it was, we blew an early lead and lost in the eleventh inning.

The fact that Adcock left the game early was only a small part of the story. Why he left, and what happened just before he did, was far more interesting. For this was the night of his memorable "hare and tortoise" race with Ruben Gomez.

From my spot in the on-deck circle, I got an excellent view of the proceedings. As a matter of fact, I was so close to the action that I almost wound up in the scuffle myself. It was just as well that I never got beyond the spectator role.

It all started when Gomez hit Adcock in the left arm with a pitched ball. Joe had been hit several times before and I could understand why he might get mad. He had missed the last three weeks of one season with a wrist injury, had missed the last two months of another with a broken arm, and had even been beaned once—the day after he hit four home runs in a game at Brooklyn.

So Joe had an excuse to lose his temper, and he used it. He started toward first base, rubbing his arm, and as he did so he yelled something at Gomez. I can't repeat the remark here, but I can say that it was uncomplimentary. Ruben yelled something back, equally uncomplimentary, and this was more than Joe could stand.

Joe started after Ruben, but he never reached him. Seeing the 220-pound Adcock descending on him, the 170-pound Gomez threw the ball at Joe as hard as he could, hitting him on the right thigh, and then took off at top speed for the safety of the visitors' dugout. This second blow raised a huge welt on Adcock's thigh, but it didn't prevent him from chasing the fleeing Gomez.

When Joe started running, I figured it was time for me to get into the act. So I followed, about ten lengths behind, and so did everybody in the Braves' dugout. As I ran across the field, I could hear the rest of the Braves thundering along behind me. I suddenly realized that if I slowed down at all, I would be run over and trampled. It reminded me of cattle stampedes I had seen in Western movies.

Suddenly, too, I visualized what might happen if Adcock caught up with Gomez, and I decided I was in no hurry to get to the dugout. But I instinctively kept on running and reached the dugout in time to see Gomez starting up the runway to the clubhouse.

Ruben had stopped in the dugout at first. He even sat down. But when he saw our gang racing after him and

realized that none of his teammates were standing by to defend him, he made a break for the clubhouse. Adcock tried his best to follow him up the runway, and he got part of the way before being stopped. I couldn't see that far because of the milling mob in front of the dugout, but I understand it took four or five men to restrain him.

There were several other minor scuffles, as you might expect with every player on both teams clustered around one dugout. One that was fairly interesting was the tumbling act put on by Del Rice of the Braves and Jackie Brandt of the Giants. Brandt stood on the dugout steps and tried to fend off Rice as he came charging in, but Del bowled him over and the two rolled down the steps like a couple of wrestlers. Both received only minor cuts. It was a miracle that neither was injured seriously.

Rice, incidentally, was in a particular hurry to reach the dugout. As Adcock's roommate and good friend, he was anxious to get a crack at Gomez himself.

The highlight of the whole affair was Coach John Riddle's attempt to tackle Gomez as he ran toward the dugout. Riddle was coaching at third base, and when Gomez crossed the third base line he tried to bring him down with a flying tackle. John missed, just barely, and Gomez continued with hardly a break in his stride. With John stretched out on the ground, it was a wonder he wasn't trampled by the thundering herd of fired-up Braves.

The riot might still be going on but for some quick thinking by the Stadium organist, Jane Jarvis. When she

saw that things were getting out of hand, she started playing the National Anthem. A few of the combatants kept right on battling, but most of them stopped in their tracks and stood at attention.

I'll never forget that night if I live to be a hundred. The sight of Gomez running away was a "first" as far as I was concerned and probably for everybody else in the park as well.

Most people thought that Gomez hadn't acted very bravely, but he was doubtless practicing Goldsmith's adage:

For he who fights and runs away
May live to fight another day. . . .

As Ruben put it afterwards, "I saw heem coming after me, and I deedn't wanna get keeled, so I run."

Adcock came in for a bit of criticism, too, for making an issue of getting hit in the first place. But he also had an answer that made sense: "Hitting is my bread and butter, and I can't do any good if I'm laid up in a hospital. The next guy who hits me is gonna be sorry."

Joe wasn't kidding, either. Fortunately, not another pitcher hit him all season.

We went to New York a week after the Gomez-Adcock incident, and the players were full of stories playing up the "rematch." Gomez was scheduled to pitch the first game of the series; so everybody was ready for action.

Even the police were ready. When we landed at LaGuardia airport from Toronto, three plainclothesmen met

Adcock and took him aside. One of them said to Joe, "This is just a precautionary measure. We hear that some Puerto Ricans may cause trouble for you here and we want to make sure nothing happens."

Adcock didn't think much of the idea, but he was outvoted. One policeman rode in the bus with him when the team went to the hotel. The two others rode behind the bus in a black Ford.

When the players noticed that a car was following them, one of them said, "Hey, bussie [their term for bus driver], see if you can shake those guys behind us." They didn't know that still another one of "those guys" was right with them on the bus.

The man with Adcock didn't want to let Joe out of his sight. I think he even drove him to the Polo Grounds. His services were unnecessary, though. Nothing happened that night except that Leo Durocher, the former Giant manager, showed up for a visit and created a big stir when he entered a box seat. Gomez pitched no-hit ball for five innings, but we finally got to him and won, 4-3.

As much as I enjoyed my one road trip, it wasn't a howling success from the Braves' standpoint. We had only a 7-6 record and lost three out of four to Brooklyn. The breaks went the wrong way, especially in the Brooklyn series; so instead of pulling away to a big lead we found the pack on our heels again.

We got another bad break a few weeks later. On a home stand in the latter part of August, Lou Sleater broke the

leaded bat that hitters always swing along with their regular one before they go up to the plate. It may sound silly to mention this as a bad break, but it's a cinch the boys didn't hit as well afterward. Adcock, for instance, batted only .247 after Labor Day and dropped below .300.

The bat that broke weighed twelve pounds, compared to about two pounds for a regular bat. How it broke was a mystery, since nobody ever used it to hit a ball, but apparently the handle rotted and gradually cracked. Anyway, the new one weighed only seven pounds and some of the players didn't like it.

When I handed Adcock the new leaded bat he said, "What good is this toothpick? I need something heavy."

I guess Billy Bruton was the only one happy about the change, and his batting average didn't exactly skyrocket toward the end of the season.

Players often change bats when they're in batting slumps, and there was some of this going on down the stretch. Danny O'Connell, whose average really suffered in August and September, tried Johnny Logan's bat for a while. He said to me, "I've gotta try another bat. This one of mine hasn't got any hits left in it." But he found out that Logan's wasn't any better.

Eddie Mathews tried using olive oil on his bat in hopes that it would give him a better grip. He gave me a bottle of it one day and I was supposed to let him use it every time he went to bat. But this didn't keep him from slumping, either.

I was practically a walking drug store the day Eddie gave me the olive oil. Besides that bottle, I had a bottle of what we called "sticky stuff" and also a rag with sticky stuff on it. I kept all of them in the back pocket of my uniform pants; so you can imagine what a mess it would have been if a line foul had caught me in the wrong spot.

"Sticky stuff" is really liquefied resin. Like olive oil, it is used to give a better grip on the bat. O'Connell, Logan, Adcock, and Henry Aaron used the bottle; Del Rice used the rag that I carried. O'Connell was the one who started it. He carried the bottle himself until he slid into second base amid a shower of broken glass.

One of our unluckiest days was August 30. That was the day we had two men thrown out at the plate on the same play, one of them by a player who was on his knees at second base when he threw the ball. It also was the day a cloudburst hit the Stadium in the ninth inning and forced us to settle for a 1-1 tie with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

There was a delay of an hour or so before the game was officially called, and I'll bet the players spent three-quarters of it grumbling about that freak double play. Most of them thought that at least one of our men was safe at the plate, and some still couldn't believe that Bill Mazeroski of the Pirates had actually thrown out a man from a kneeling position at second base.

Wes Covington, the victim of Mazeroski's amazing feat, said, "How did the guy ever do it? When I started home I didn't think he had a chance in the world to get me.

"You know, he's always surprisin' me. A few weeks ago I played in close because I didn't think he had much power, and he knocked a double over my head. He must get inspired when he sees me comin'."

It wasn't until three weeks later that we found out how much Mazeroski and the rainstorm had hurt us. The game had to be replayed at Pittsburgh because the Pirates were not scheduled in Milwaukee again. This time the Pirates won, 2-1 in ten innings, and guess who scored the winning run. Mazeroski, of course. It was only right that the villain be in at the kill.

The boys were convinced after that unfortunate tie that if they did win the pennant, nobody could accuse them of doing it by luck. They knew that if they won they would do so strictly on merit, which of course was as it should be.

About this time there were those who suspected that the pressure of the close pennant drive was beginning to tell on the Braves. In answer to these doubters, and in the hope of inspiring the players, Haney did an unusual thing. He had a phonograph installed in the clubhouse, and every day before the game he played "Heart," from *Damn Yankees*.

Before long, the players found themselves singing the words, "You gotta have heart"—before games, after games, and even while games were in progress. It was a fine gimmick, and while no big change was apparent on the field, I'm sure it did some good.

In spite of our August troubles, we stayed on top of the National League standings. It seemed that whenever

we lost, so did the Redlegs and Dodgers. But we could hardly expect this sort of thing to last forever.

On August 31, things began to brighten up again. We won a twi-night double header from the Cardinals. It was a long one, probably the first in history to start in one month and end in another (at 12:01 A.M., September 1).

The next day, Warren Spahn pitched a two-hitter for the 199th victory of his career. And the day after that was even better. Bob Trowbridge beat the Cardinals, making it four in a row in the series, and the Dodgers lost a double header to the Giants.

Maybe we were lucky after all. Certainly we couldn't have asked for a bigger break than having the lowly Giants take two from the Bums. Besides, we had a four-game winning streak going—five, in fact, if you ignored the tie with the Pirates. And best of all, we led the league by three and a half games with just four weeks to go.

The outlook could hardly have been any rosier. The Dodgers really were folding this time (we thought), and we could kill off the Redlegs' chances ourselves in the four-game series coming up. We could almost taste that wonderful meal of World Series money.

CHAPTER XII

Wait 'til Next Year

Right in the midst of the biggest thing that ever happened to me, I had to go back to school. My junior year in high school started the day after Labor Day, and I must admit that my heart wasn't in it. I just couldn't get my mind off the pennant race and the World Series.

Like the players, I kept thinking about the big check I'd get if the Braves won the pennant. The only difference was that I was thinking in terms of hundreds instead of thousands. Whatever the amount was to be, though, I had already spent it a hundred different times.

My two clubhouse colleagues, Chad Blossfield and Dave Williams, were in the same pleasant boat. As ball boy and clubhouse boy, respectively, they also would cut in on the spoils. Carried away with suspense, the three of us went to Danny O'Connell one day and asked him how much we might get. Danny wasn't a statistician or an accountant,

but he always had taken an interest in us and we figured that he would be the one to ask.

Danny took the matter under advisement and presented his findings the next day. "Let's see," he said. "You boys will get about a thousand apiece if we win, two fifty for——"

We didn't give him a chance to finish. Before he could say the words "second place," we chorused: "A thousand dollars? Are you kidding?"

"No, I'm not kidding," Danny answered. "There's no set amount for batboys—it's not like a half-share, or a quarter-share or anything like that. The players just decide how much they'll give.

"What did you get last year? Two hundred, right? Well, first place is worth about four times as much, and if you add a little for a bigger park in Milwaukee than in Brooklyn, you get around a thousand. You might even get more than that if we win the Series."

"More than that?" I gulped. "How much more?"

"Oh, maybe two or three hundred," he said. "You see, that thousand is sort of a round figure. Chances are you'll get more if we win the Series and a little less if we lose. Not much less, though."

O'Connell's figures made sense. They made dollars, in fact, if you'll pardon a worn-out pun. They also made it that much tougher for me to concentrate on my studies at Marquette High. The anticipation was getting so great that I began to wonder how I'd ever last out the four weeks until the end of the season.

I thought of any number of things to do with my World Series check, but finally decided to be smart and put it in Dad's building and loan association. I figured I could make much better use of the money later, especially since I'd be going to college in a couple of years. I intend to study law, and those big law books aren't cheap. Besides, it was good business to put the money where it would earn dividends.

On the second day of school, we had an afternoon game; so I got out of class early. It was the only day I would have to miss any school since the Braves were going to be out of town the rest of the season except for one week-end.

That afternoon we were slaughtered by the Cincinnati Redlegs, 12-2. Ordinarily a lopsided defeat is a lot easier to take than one of those 2-1 heart-breakers. I once heard Fred Haney say, "If we have to lose, I'd just as soon take a good licking. Those close ones tear your heart out."

We had lost one of that sort only the night before. We blew all sorts of chances and finally lost in the tenth inning on Frank Robinson's home run. Twice we had runners on first and second with nobody out, but each time Bobby Thomson failed to bunt and then hit into a double play.

As tough as that defeat was, in several respects the 12-2 licking was even tougher. In the first place, the Braves looked much worse in losing—not at all like the pennant contenders that the standings showed them to be. In the second place, Warren Spahn, trying for his two hundredth major league victory, was knocked out of the box in the

second inning. Worst of all, this made it three in a row for the Redlegs in the series and put them back in the thick of things at a time when we might have pushed them out of the race.

Actually, though, it wasn't time to start shedding tears. The Braves still led the League, and as the old-timers say, you're the team to beat as long as you're on top. Even the fact that eighteen of the remaining twenty-one games would be played away from home wasn't really a cause for worry. We had been just as successful on the road as at home.

I thought of all these things as the club left for Chicago to start a two-week road trip. I thought, too, of the various trials and tribulations that the boys had already survived. If they had come this far, in spite of everything, there seemed no good reason why they couldn't go all the way.

By trials and tribulations, I mean the early-season troubles under Charlie Grimm, the terrible home stand that cost Charlie his job as manager, and the difficulty in getting adjusted to Fred Haney. This doesn't mean that Fred was hard to get along with—just that any club has certain adjustments to make when it changes managers in the middle of a season.

In the Braves' case, the changeover was considerably tougher than one might ordinarily expect. In Grimm's four years as manager, he had won an unusual degree of respect from his players. With some of them it was even

more than respect. Burdette, for instance, told me after Charlie left, "You know, I loved that guy. There's nobody finer in baseball."

Haney had to be careful in his handling of the players for the simple and obvious reason that Grimm had been so easy on them. Haney was anything but a tyrant, but he was tough compared with the easy-going Grimm. After taking over, he observed, "I'd like to crack down as far as certain things and individuals are concerned, but I've got to do it gradually or they'll think I'm trying to be a dictator."

This general problem, however, was no greater than the one presented by the hard core of "Grimm men." There were some who openly objected to Charlie's dismissal, and whether or not they actually resented Fred, they obviously weren't happy about the situation for the first few weeks or so.

About six weeks after he became manager, Haney said, "There are certain men that I've got to win over to my side if I'm going to get anywhere. I don't want to mention names, and you can understand why not, but it's a tough thing and I just hope I can lick it."

Time heals all wounds, or so says the proverb. At any rate, by that time it was fairly safe to assume that the adjustment had been made. It certainly should have been, in view of the fact that the players had a common goal to shoot for—the pennant and the gold that goes with it.

The boys began their fourteen-game road trip by losing

two straight to the last-place Cubs, and I guess we should have known then and there that this wasn't our year. Ever since the Braves moved to Milwaukee in 1953, they had treated their Chicago "neighbors" like cousins. Now, when they needed to beat them in the worst way, they couldn't.

By that time our losing streak stood at five and our spirits at zero. It began to look as though we could kiss first place good-bye.

But the boys could smell that money—close to \$10,000 apiece if they should win the World Series—and they pulled themselves together in time to sweep the Sunday double header from the Cubs. The famine finally over, they took a one-game lead into Brooklyn to open their last swing around the eastern half of the League.

While the Brooklyn series was billed as a showdown between the teams most likely to win the pennant, it actually didn't prove a thing. They won one and we won one, and we left town with the same one-game lead and two games fewer to play. (Technically, I shouldn't say "we left town," since I was eating my heart out in Milwaukee at the time.)

That win from the Dodgers bolstered my hopes tremendously. I figured that if the boys were going to fold, they almost certainly would have done it in that second game with the Dodgers. Burdette, the League's leading pitcher, had been blasted off the mound in the first inning and the Bums took a 3-0 lead. Then, after the Braves kay-

oed big Don Newcombe, a twenty-three-game winner, and went ahead, they blew a 7-4 lead of their own. Finally, Bobby Thomson tried to steal home for no reason at all—the boner that cost him a hundred-dollar fine.

In spite of all this, the Braves kept battling back and won the game, 8-7. Although the victory made a difference of only one game in the standings, it was far more important than that in my book. It made me feel confident that my “teammates” had the stuff to go all the way in this hectic pennant race.

According to what some of the players told me later, Thomson was probably the happiest victim of a fine in baseball history. “I’d pay a hundred dollars every day if we could win the rest of our games,” Thomson said after the game that day. “Maybe I pulled a rock, but we won and that’s all that matters right now.”

An exceptionally happy Brave that same afternoon was Bob Buhl, who as the winning pitcher achieved his eighth victory of the season over the Dodgers. He was the first pitcher in forty years to win eight games from one club, the first Brave ever to do it, and only the sixth man in baseball history. He fell just one victory short of the all-time record set by Ed Reulbach of the Cubs against the Dodgers in 1908.

Buhl was not as thrilled over the mere accomplishment of beating a club eight times as he was over the fact that he had done something that the great Grover Cleveland

Alexander had been the last to do. "It's really a thrill to be in company like that," he said when somebody mentioned Alexander's name.

Thomson hadn't even got around to paying his hundred dollars before he won it back. He saved both games of a double header at Philadelphia with throws to the plate from left field. Each time he cut off what would have been the winning run for the Phillies, and each time the Braves went on to win.

As a matter of fact, Bobby didn't have to make both throws to regain his money. Manager Haney rescinded the fine after the first game, saying, "Bobby, the fine's canceled and you're forgiven. Just keep making throws like that and everything will be all right." Bobby immediately took him up on it and repeated his heroic act in the second game. Theoretically that put him a hundred dollars ahead, but he was more than glad to call it even.

Spahn got his two hundredth victory in the second game, yet so many other things happened that night that he was just one of many Milwaukee heroes. I told him later that he should have picked a better spot for his big moment, so that he could have received all the credit he deserved, but he obviously didn't care how he won No. 200.

"What's the difference?" he said. "It's wonderful no matter how it happens."

I could see what he meant. You can't pick your spot for a once-in-a-lifetime feat like that.

The Braves won that double header like champions.

They came from behind in both games and, after Thomson averted defeat with his clutch throws, won both in extra innings. After this, and the way they had bounced back at Brooklyn the day before, it didn't look like anything could stop them. Certainly yours truly, from a vantage point a thousand miles away, was convinced that they were going to do it.

But then came the relapse. First, the Phillies handed the Braves their worst shellacking of the year, 13-1; then the Phillies did it again, 6-5, and finally the Braves could do no better than split two-game series with the lowly Giants and Pirates. The boys came home in second place, a full game behind the Dodgers and with only seven left to play. Actually they were two games behind, because they had lost two more games than the Bums.

Pennant hopes in Milwaukee had not been so low since the June home stand which dumped the Braves from first place to fifth. The fire was rekindled somewhat when the Cubs helped us to a 6-4 victory in the first game of the final series at home, especially since the Pirates performed a good turn by dumping the Dodgers. But the next day brought another letdown. We blew a game to the Cubs and a chance to regain first place.

I don't think I'll ever forget the sad scene in the clubhouse when I walked in after that game. The place was like a mortuary. All the players sat around in front of their lockers, their heads bowed as though their last friends had just left this world. They could see the pennant slip-

ping away, and their big World Series checks along with it.

Johnny Logan, whose clutch home run in the ninth inning had sent the game into overtime, finally broke the silence when he said, "Well, boys, we sure got enough help from Pittsburgh. We couldn't ask for any more. But we've gotta help ourselves and we aren't doing it."

Del Rice took the optimistic side, saying, "We're no worse off than before. Brooklyn lost, too."

"Sure," said Eddie Mathews, "but there aren't as many games left."

And Thomson said sadly, "Time is running out. Just when we can win one that would make a difference, we don't."

Thomson knew what it was like to go through a close race like this. He had done it before with the Giants, and successfully, too. I guess there isn't a sports fan anywhere who will ever forget his dramatic home run in the pennant play-off of 1951. It was one of the greatest moments in sports history.

Sunday was the final day of the regular season at home. It would also be my last day of the year as batboy unless the Braves rallied to win the pennant.

The Stadium was jammed as it seldom had been jammed before. Paid attendance was 47,014, second only to the 47,604 which set the all-time record for the Labor Day double header with the Redlegs. This boosted us above the 2,000,000 mark for the third straight year, thus

adding another chapter to Milwaukee's fabulous attendance record.

Most of the fans, packed in like sardines, were there because of the closeness of the pennant race. Many, though, showed up in the hope of winning one of the two automobiles that the Braves have always given away on the final day. Some of the writers even bought tickets to get in on the sweepstakes.

Dad was one of the many who thought he was going to drive away in a new car, and he was also one of the many who didn't win. After the game ended, I waited in the dugout to watch the drawing in case somebody I knew was a winner. As usual, both lucky persons were from outside Milwaukee, illustrating the tremendous patronage that the Braves receive from around the state.

While the Braves gave away cars, they didn't give away the ball game. They won, thanks to the first grand slam home run of Billy Bruton's career, and better yet, went back into first place because the Dodgers' game at Pittsburgh was suspended after eight innings because of the Pennsylvania curfew.

Despite the victory, the day was a sad one for me. The team was leaving the next day on a road trip that would wind up the season and decide the pennant race. I wanted to go along, naturally, but it was impossible. In the first place, I was in school, and in the second, nobody invited me. I just had to stay behind and sweat it out.

The boys left late Monday afternoon. Quite a few peo-

ple went to the airport to give them a sendoff, and of course I was one of them. Besides wishing the boys luck, I made myself useful by taking Taylor Phillips and Dave Jolly to the airport and then keeping Phillips' car. It really was rough watching that plane take off. I felt sure I was missing what might be the most exciting event in my life.

First stop was Cincinnati, for one big game. It was played in the afternoon; so I couldn't find out until after school how it came out. When I heard the score, 7-1 in the Braves' favor, I practically had my World Series money counted.

If ever a team looked "in," it was the Braves—a game ahead with only three to play, and those with the Cardinals, a team they had beaten six times in a row. How could they miss? They couldn't—yet somehow they did.

First, came a heart-breaking defeat on Friday night, then an even more heart-breaking defeat on Saturday night. Spahn was magnificent in the second one, but the boys couldn't get him any runs. It was awful to listen to on the radio and undoubtedly even worse to see.

The Dodgers, meanwhile, were rained out Friday night and then won a double header from the Pirates Saturday afternoon. That put them in front, and when they won again on Sunday, it was all over. At 2:31 P.M. (Central Standard Time), while the Braves were in the process of beating the Cardinals at last, death came to our fond hopes for the pennant.

Milwaukee resembled a huge undertaker's parlor that

afternoon. I wouldn't be surprised if some people hung crepe on their front doors. I shed no tears, but I sure felt like it. Besides my grief over the loss of the pennant there was the matter of the difference between first and second place World Series money. Nobody enjoys seeing \$750 frittered away.

As disappointed as everybody was, a crowd of 15,000 turned out at the airport that night to welcome the Braves home. It was a wonderful display of loyalty and something that happens only in baseball-mad Milwaukee.

When Manager Haney got off the plane and saw the mob there to greet his team, he said, "They're the greatest fans in the world and we let them down."

By showing up in such huge numbers the fans showed that they were ready to forgive and forget—well, at least to forgive. Forgetting would not be that easy.

My share of the second place money was \$250, exactly as expected. It wasn't much, but it would help carry me through the long, long wait 'til next year.

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